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EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW PAGE 75://NOW//ONIMUSHA 3//REVIEW

# ONIMUSHA 3

## DEMON SIEGE

PLUS: **GHOST RECON 2 / KOTOR 2**

PAGE 60://FEATURE//IT'S SHOWTIME//THE INCREDIBLES

# THE INCREDIBLES!


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For Kit Yun, the  
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Hong Kong underworld  
is to go back in.



Violence

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# JET LI RISE TO HONOR 義氣



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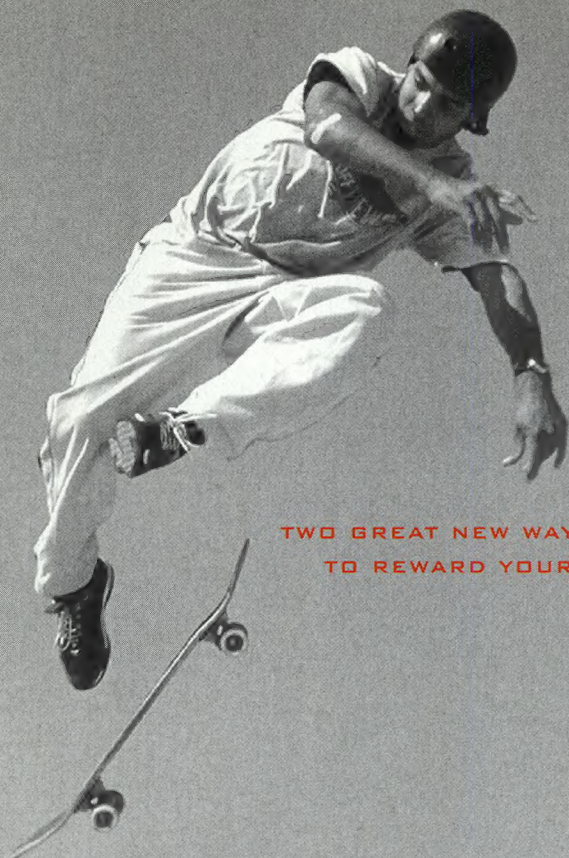
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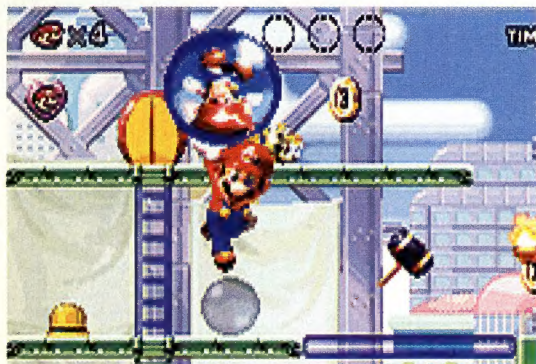
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THAT  
KEEP  
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GIVING

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GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES



YOU MESS WITH THE BULL. YOU GET THE HORNS

There was a time when the game biz was compared to every other industry but its own. "Games are like the music industry." No, wait: "Games are like the book business." Hmm, no, no, no: "Games are like packaged goods (up there with Ivory soap and Kleenex)." Well, nope: "It's more like the toy biz." Whoa there—it's none of the above: "It's like the movie business."

That last one seems to have stuck. Every year, we hear how the game business has made more than the movie business. And, sure, we have studios, stars, directors, producers, scriptwriters, storyboards, special effects, CG artists, and soundtracks. We even have ratings.

But where it really counts, games and movies are completely different. Different experiences, different technology, different pricing—different altogether.

The reality is the game biz has no comparison. It's its own thing. It has grown up, left the house, and started a family. Let all comparisons stop, and let there be no more identity crisis. Game industry, you have arrived.

And speaking of arriving, by the time you read this, the GMR editors will be arriving in Los Angeles for this year's big games wowfest, the E3 trade show. Check out our special E3 preview (page 26) and also visit our sister website, 1UP.com, for all the up-to-the-minute E3 news.

Tom Byron\_Editor-in-Chief



Dear Mr. Byron,  
We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday a day for whatever it is we get in late, but we think you're crazy for making us write an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us, in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. But what we found out, is that each one of us is a brain, and an athlete, and a basketball, a princess, and a criminal.  
Does that answer your questions?

Sincerely yours,  
The  
Early-Afternoon  
Branch  
Club

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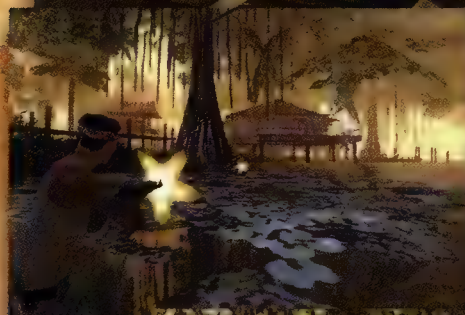
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# **"Why I may never play Battlefield 1942 again"**

**- PC GAMER, March 2004**

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# POST

ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE...OR AT LEAST THESE TWO PAGES ARE. PLAY YOUR PART

## WAR GAMES STILL STING

As someone who is critical of race issues AND addicted to videogames, I often find myself in a quandary. Every time I plunk down \$50 for a game, I have to hope that the camera and controls are tight *and* that my people aren't horrendously stereotyped.

I wanted to write to you today specifically about Jeff Green's blurb in your May 2004 issue regarding the Vietnam War and videogames. While he brings up some interesting points, I think it was shortsighted of him to assume that there is no controversy. It's not surprising that he hasn't heard about the controversy, since race is a subject rarely mentioned or explored in depth in the realm of game journalism. There was quite a bit of discussion about the recent Vietnam themes in games amongst some of us in the Asian-American community, especially (but not limited to) the gratuitous use of the racist slur "gook" in certain games. One may argue that the slur was included for realism's sake, but then again, the rape and murder of Vietnamese civilians was not included in those games, nor was Agent

Orange and the damaging effects that chemical warfare still has on Vietnamese people—and those things certainly happened during the war, but it would be distasteful and disturbing to include them.

Jeff Green identified himself as the child of Berkeley "peaceniks." To be fair, I will identify myself as a Vietnamese refugee and child of a South Vietnamese soldier, with uncles on both sides of the conflict, some of whom did not survive the war. Not only was there personal loss, there was also a loss of homeland, of a people, of countless things that can't be quantified. I'm not writing to say what is OK and acceptable for people to play, nor will I pretend to speak for all Asian-Americans or even all Vietnamese. I'm trying to offer a different perspective: Just because Jeff Green has gotten to a place where he feels comfortable playing such games, that doesn't mean the rest of us have, and it doesn't mean these games are made with any type of sensitivity toward Vietnamese, other Asians, or other people of color.

\_Thien-bao Thuc Phi  
Minneapolis, MN

**Jeff Green responds:** You make excellent points, and I certainly didn't mean to imply that this issue was now closed or that there still weren't numerous problems inherent not just in this game, but in *any* war game. The point of my column was simply to acknowledge that the developers themselves no longer find Vietnam to be taboo, and that I—with no personal ties or losses associated with the war, unlike you—have been able to make that leap with EA. But, of course, every person's individual response is different and equally valid, especially with a subject as controversial and emotional as the Vietnam War.

## WE OUGHTA BE IN PICTURES?

Just to start off, I want to say that you guys have a great magazine going. I have to say that I'm a movie guy, so I usually go and see every movie that's based on a game, unless the game really sucks. That's kinda where you come in. I've noticed a small lack of reviews or articles for those movies. I'm a big *Resident Evil* fan, and it would be

really great if, when the movie is about to come out, you could do a great review on it, because sequels sometimes tend to suck ass. It would be a great start for reviews. So that would be cool.

\_Dallas

About this time last year, we reviewed Uwe Boll's abominable interpretation of *The House of the Dead* and afterward promised ourselves that we'd never do such a thing again. With the news of John Woo (*Face/Off*, *Broken Arrow*, *Mission: Impossible 2*) optioning the movie rights to Nintendo's *Metroid*, we may have to rethink our stance...just as long as he takes it easy with the doves.



→ This is what it sounds like.

## MESSAGE BOARD JUNKIES

If you haven't posted on GMR's message board yet ([www.gmrmagazine.com](http://www.gmrmagazine.com)), then you are a loser. Mielke asked everyone what they thought about our Radical Best list of 2003. Here's what you said:

Considering how I only play RPGs and strategy games, I agree wholeheartedly with your choices in those areas. I've lost track of how many times I've played through *KOTOR*, and *Disgaea* was a great strategy game all around!  
Lalith

No love for the Prince of *Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner*, dUdos? What's with that? POP

on PS2 → *NSDU*, IMHO. And *20E2* is just so very slept on; it's criminal!  
lirestar46

As for GMR's awards, I agree completely with everything except maybe with *Need for Speed: Underground* winning most radical for PS2. I say: maybe, because I haven't played it yet, but it's hard to imagine it being much better than *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution*, *Prince of Persia*,

or even *Tony Hawk's Underground*.  
Knsy

I only disagreed with one choice. I think *FFTA* deserved most radical RPG. It was the best game I played all year and had not 1 but 2 billion hours of gameplay.  
\_LuigiSunshine

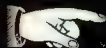
I'd have to agree with some of you when I say



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## WOMAN LIKE A MAN

I would like to share my own thoughts concerning the "are women portrayed negatively in videogames" debate that has appeared regularly in the Post section of your magazine. Most of the readers who have written in seem to be primarily concerned about one thing: that female videogame characters often wear skimpy clothing and have oversized breasts. While I sympathize with these individuals, their reaction seems a little overstated considering that the same problem has afflicted movies, television, animation, and comic books for years. The fact that gaming (which, like it or not, has always been a primarily male pastime) is following in the footsteps of other art forms is not surprising.

But there is a bigger issue here that your readers seem to be missing. To be a woman means to represent virtues and ideals different from what men usually uphold. While competitiveness, aggression, and justice are among the qualities that generally define manhood, women have always valued a different set of ideals—peace, grace, hope, and understanding. Unfortunately, in most games starring "strong" female protagonists (those that are "getting the job done"), these latter virtues are commonly ignored. Too often, women are portrayed much like their male counterparts—as warriors, assassins, or some other kind of killing machine that shoots first and asks questions later. There is a

difference between strong women who display intelligence and courage (such as Yorda from *Ico* or Aerith from *Final Fantasy VII*) and tough women who commit acts of violence (Lara Croft, Hibana from *Nightshade*, etc.). Characters such as Yorda and Aerith represent ideal femininity and thus are positive role models. On the other hand, characters such as Lara Croft and Hibana are negative role models because their only solution to solving problems is through cold, unrelenting

fighting and killing, and these are values that neither man nor woman should embrace.

So here is my question: Why aren't more of your readers demanding wholesome and caring women protagonists in their games? I get the impression from the letters your female audience has sent in that none of them has a problem with aggressive, violent women so long as they are not overly endowed or sensual. My belief, however, is that the tough, masculine stereotype so often forced onto female characters is detrimental (and condescending) to womanhood and is an issue of greater concern than the skimpy-outfit debate that has raged on in your magazine for months.

—Dan Anderson

**And that'll be the final word on the whole boy/girl thing. You may now resume sending us genital-enlargement spam, really bad freestyle raps, and résumés for Pfister's job.**

## SHE SAYS "NO WAY!"

Hey, first of all, your magazine is the best magazine ever. You guys are unique and funny...I love the way you guys preview games and include all those little details like Better Than and all of that. Anyway, that's not the point. The point is that my mom doesn't want to pay for my magazine anymore and she wants to cancel my Xbox Live account because she's crazy and, well, I need help knowing what to do in this situation. I believe many other kids have the same problem, so yeah, what can I do? Grab a knife...I mean...talk to her?

—Rodrigo Ortega

**Don't worry, Rodrigo. GMR's Emergency Response Subscription Task Force has been dispatched to your location and will be "negotiating" with your mother. Just put the knife down and let the professionals do their job. They have bigger knives.**



that the only result I found questionable was *Need for Speed Underground* as the PS2 game of the year. I mean, yeah, it was a good game, but I'm not sure it was better than, say, *Prince of Persia* or possibly *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando*.

*Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando* shoulda got best action. *SOCOM II* shoulda got best shooter. And *SOCOM II* or *Ratchet* shoulda been best PS2 game.

*ROTOR* for GOTY = spot on  
SolidSnizzle

I think *SOCOM II* should have won best PS2 game—the only game I have played on my PS2 in the last couple of months has been *SOCOM II*. The online gameplay is just so addictive, and if you have any friends to play with, it only makes things better.  
GopherCakes



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Wizards of the Coast	<a href="http://www.wizards.com">www.wizards.com</a>	11, 35



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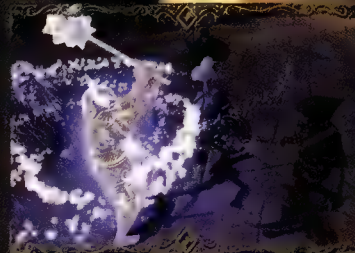
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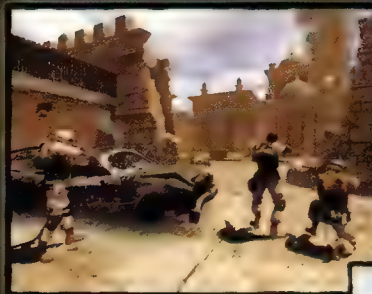
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# FRONT



GMR NEWS NETWORK

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The first PSP game ever shown publicly slays critics

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Nintendo shows a playful sense of humor with a new *Zelda* and GBA SP

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*Death, Jr.*? We go straight to the source

### PS3 FIRST LOOK: DARK SECTOR 031

A next-gen game from Digital Extremes, of *Unreal Tournament* fame

### FIRST LOOK: ENTHUSIA 034

We wondered when Konami would make a racing game





→ Despite the juvenile appearance of its main character, the son of the Grim Reaper, *Death, Jr.* is full of macabre humor. One of Death's friends is Seep, an armless, legless creature in a jar (at bottom right, held by Stigmatra, who bleeds from her hands and feet). Death, Jr.'s feisty female sidekick is Pandora, who, natch, has a thing for boxes. Digital Eclipse is keen on Death's scythe moves, used for both battle and maneuvering through environments.



# PSP'S DEADLY DEBUT

DEATH, JR. FIRST PROOF OF LIFE FOR SONY'S HANDHELD

U.S.A.

With Nintendo waiting until E3 to debut its DS, the recent Game Developers Conference was all about Sony's entry in the coming handheld wars. While *Spyro: Season of Ice* developer Digital Eclipse showed off its PSP game, Sony's technical staff painted an impressive picture of the system's capabilities.

*Death, Jr.* is the first officially announced PSP game, a 3D platformer with an oddball mix of cartoon charm and Gothic edge. Death is the star—a young Death, anyway, with a head too big for his skeletal body and a scythe he still

needs to grow into. The demo on display was far from finished, but its visuals came close to PS2 quality, while the game itself has the action-focused character of *Spyro* or *Maximo*.

Andrew House, Sony's executive vice president, claimed that 81 developers worldwide are already at work on PSP games, and a raft of representatives from major studios backed him up—even Factor 5's Julian Eggebrecht, a Nintendo stalwart, had some kind words to say about Sony's system.

In the technical seminars, Sony's software gurus offered hard details on

just what their handheld can do. The PSP is "close to PS2 and in some ways superior to PS2 in feature set," said engineer David Coombes, pointing to extra hardware features for animation, lighting, and more efficient curved-surface rendering. Developers are also reportedly finding plenty to do with the PSP's extrawide 16:9 screen.

Coombes also painted a clearer picture of what its wireless networking hardware can do. Aside from talking to other PSPs for link games, the PSP can connect with a PC to download media or connect to the Internet. Its USB ports,

meanwhile, could eventually connect with peripherals ranging from cameras to GPS navigators.

Sony's representatives also had reassuring comments on the ease of development for PSP, a key issue after the time it took developers to master the PS2. At the same time, though, they pointed out that a powerful system will need talent to match—a top-notch PSP game will require the same talent and resources as an equivalent PS2 project. With PSP's arrival next year, a handheld may give competing consoles a run for their money. **16**



# ZELDA 20XX?

## NEW ZELDA GAMES HINTED AT JAPAN

A sequel to *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* is coming some time this millennium, according to director Eiji Aonuma, speaking at the Game Developers Conference. Aonuma, the hands-on boss of the original GameCube *Zelda*, delivered a tongue-in-cheek "Wind Waker 2: 20XX" slide at the end of his presentation, promising more details at E3. He also hinted at the prospect of *Zelda* for Nintendo's new DS handheld, and

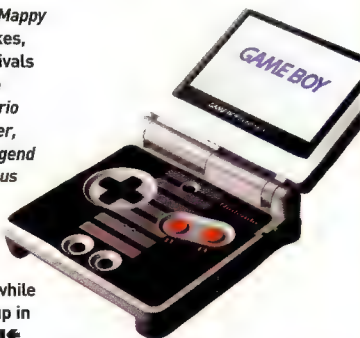
perhaps even a connection between the GameCube and DS games. **IK**



# GBA NES

## NINTENDO CLASSICS REAPPEAR U.S.A.

Minus the Japan-only *Mappy* and *Star Soldier* remakes, Nintendo's Famicom Mini revivals are coming to America as the Classic NES series. *Super Mario Bros.*, *Donkey Kong*, *Ice Climber*, *Pac-Man*, *Bomberman*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Excitebike*, and *Xenious* are set to release June 7 in faithfully re-created GBA form, with handy extras like save-game support. Each game will cost \$19.99, while \$99.99 buys a GBA SP done up in classic NES-controller style. **IK**



## [BLIPS]

### Ex-Deus

Developer Harvey Smith has left Ion Storm to form his own development studio. Smith is best known as the project director of last year's *Deus Ex: Invisible War* for Xbox and PC. While he is not ready to discuss specific plans just yet, the future looks bright for the developer. Despite fans' mixed reaction to *DX:IW*, the series is widely regarded as one of the most innovative around.

### Street Fighter is back

Capcom has announced the U.S. release of *Street Fighter Anniversary Collection* for PS2. The package will contain two games: *Hyper Street Fighter II*, which appeared in Japan last year, and *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*, the most recent iteration of the series, previously released in arcades and on Dreamcast. Check shops this summer.



## GAMEPORT VITAL GAME INFO, NOW BOARDING..

### ✈ ARRIVALS COMING SOON

SYSTEM	ETA	TITLE	HOW HOT?
PS2	MAY	ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE French and Japanese, like a sushi baguette.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
GBA	MAY	RIVER CITY RANSOM EX Say it with me: "BARF!"	🔥🔥
PC, XB	MAY	THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS Our advice would be just to stay out of the shadows, then.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2, XB	JUNE	DRIV3R Concept for a chauffeur game canned at the last minute.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2	JUNE	FRONT MISSION 4 Typographers hoping for <i>Font Mission</i> disappointed.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2, XB	JUNE	SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM Work up to it by locking yourself in with your little sister.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2, XB	JUNE	PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY Not endorsed by the Psychic Friends Network.	🔥🔥🔥
GC, PC, PS2, XB	JUNE	SPIDER-MAN 2 Extra attention paid to tentacle technology.	🔥🔥🔥
XB	JUNE	SUDEKI Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.	🔥🔥🔥
XB	JUNE	FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR Competing with <i>Rainbow Six</i> for most colorful soldier.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
GC	JUNE	ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES Connectivity gets a shot in the arm.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
GBA	JUNE	SUPER MARIO BROS. This or <i>Xenious</i> ? Gee, it's a tough choice.	🔥🔥🔥
GBA	JUNE	SHINING FORCE Camelot rumored to counter with <i>Golden Force</i> .	🔥🔥🔥
PC	JUNE	DOOM 3 We hope it hits in June, anyway.	🔥🔥🔥
GC, PS2	JULY	SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW Xbox owners point and laugh	🔥🔥🔥
GC	JULY	TALES OF SYMPHONIA It's not a music game, kids.	🔥🔥🔥

### ✈ DEPARTURES OUT NOW

SYSTEM	TITLE	GMR SCORE
PC, XB	SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW Sam Fisher has stolen (and assassinated) our hearts.	9 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2, XB	THE SUFFERING Prison's bad enough without demons, thanks.	5 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2, XB	FIGHT NIGHT 2004 Wiggle that stick, boys.	9 <sup>/10</sup>
GC, PS2, XB	SAMURAI JACK: THE SHADOW OF AKU Aku struck the development house this time.	6 <sup>/10</sup>
PC, PS2	FINAL FANTASY XI Do you want to touch my moogles?	9 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2, XB	MVP BASEBALL 2004 One home run scored.	9 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2, XB	ESPN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL Not quite as valuable a player.	7 <sup>/10</sup>
XB	NINJA GAIDEN So good we reviewed it twice.	9 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2	SEVEN SAMURAI 20XX You'd hope for at least a point per samurai, but no	2 <sup>/10</sup>
GC	WARIOWARE, INC.: MEGA PARTY GAME\$ Almost as good on a TV.	8 <sup>/10</sup>
PC	BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM Welcome to the jungle, baby. You're gonna die.	9 <sup>/10</sup>
XB	TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS Sadly, now known as "that other ninja game."	6 <sup>/10</sup>
XB	BREAKDOWN The Japanese make a great FPS. No, really.	5 <sup>/10</sup>
GC	CUSTOM ROBO Much better than <i>Completely Standard Robo</i> .	8 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2	EYETOY: GROOVE Dance like an idiot and see yourself.	8 <sup>/10</sup>
PS2	CRIMSON SEA 2 It's actually just red Kool-Aid. Mystery solved!	7 <sup>/10</sup>

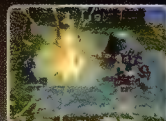
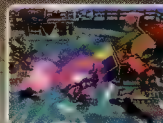


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# SPECIAL REPORT: E3

## GMA SNEAKS A PEEK AT THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

U.S.A.

➔ It's that time of year again—time for the entire gaming industry to pack its bags and head to sunny Southern California for the 10th annual Electronics Entertainment Expo, or as most people know it, E3, the biggest annual industry trade show in the world. New products will be unveiled, big announcements will be made, and—as usual—there will be a ton of stuff to check out.

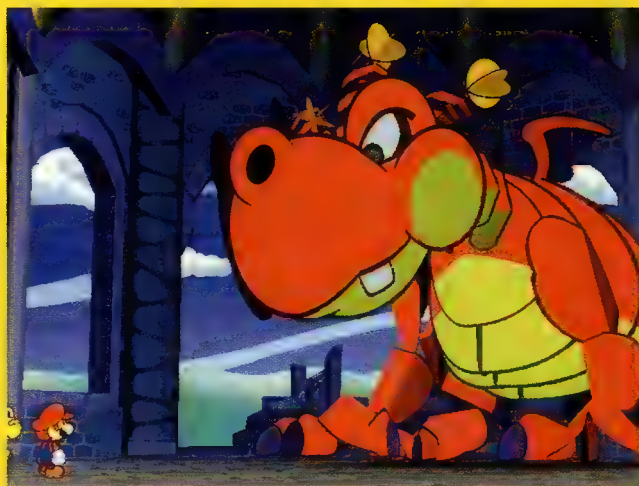
Since most of you won't be able to make it to the show—it is an industry trade event, after all—we've put together a little sneak peek of some info we've managed to get, including a few educated guesses on what we just might see this year.

### NINTENDO

**What we know:** As usual, the Big N is playing most of its E3 cards close to the vest. Even so, we've managed to confirm a few choice titles. GameCube's lineup is looking particularly attractive, thanks to a new *Fire Emblem* installment, a jaw-dropping

*Mario* sequel, and a follow-up to the offbeat *Pikmin*. Nintendo will also be getting its groove on with the rhythm-based *Donkey Kong*, and *Zelda* fans will have the GBA/GC connectivity-centric *Four Swords Adventures* to tide them over until the next proper sequel. We're eagerly awaiting the first real glimpse of *Mario Tennis*; announced at the same time *Golf* was, it's since disappeared beneath the waves. GBA owners can look forward to the oddly *Golden Sun*-ish *Mario Golf: Advance Tour* (developed, in fact, by Camelot) and more platforming goodness with *Mario vs. Donkey Kong*. Of course, the latest iterations of the indomitable *Pokémon* franchise will be on display, with wireless link in tow.

**What we've heard:** Rumors abound. Will we see the Nintendo DS? And for that matter, will we see any of Nintendo's rumored top-tier sequels, such as *Metroid Prime 2*, 100 *Marios*, and the mysterious follow-up to *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*? We're also wondering what the deal is with FPS *Geist*, which was announced at last year's show but quickly succumbed to the general malaise felt by Nintendo fans after that whole "we suck" presentation.



→ Clockwise from top: Mario confronts a larger-than-life enemy in *Paper Mario 2*; The *Fire Emblem* combatants get down to business in the middle of a town; hordes of *Pikmin* follow Olimar's lead; the *Mario Golf: Advance Tour* environs call to mind *Golden Sun*'s look and feel; and Donkey and Diddy get down in *Donkey Konga*, Nintendo's first rhythm game (with special drum peripheral, no less).



## SUBTLE SIZZLE

### NAMCO

➔ It's Pac-Man's 25th anniversary, and Namco is celebrating with a new multiplatform *Pac-Man* adventure. It's also got a few sequels to some of its big-name franchises in store for E3, including *Ace Combat 5*, *Dead to Rights II*, *Time Crisis: Crisis Zone*, and *Xenosaga: Episode II*. *SRS: Street Racing Syndicate* will be making a return appearance, as will the GameCube RPG *Tales of Symphonia*. RPG fans will also be treated to a look at the card-based *Baten Kaitos*, while action fans can look forward to the *Tekken* spin-off *Death by Degrees*. Check last month's *GMR* for Nina love.



### SAMMY STUDIOS

➔ Sammy's pretty well known in Japan for its widespread pachinko machines, but it has kept a bit of a low profile Stateside. Hopefully, that will soon change, as it has a slew of interesting titles on the way. *Iron Phoenix*, a 16-player Xbox Live-exclusive kung fu action game, will be shown at E3, along with a new stealth adventure titled *Spy Fiction* and the vampire shooter *Darkwatch*. Finally, Sammy will be bringing *Guilty Gear Isuka*, the latest iteration of its popular 2D fighting franchise, to PS2.



## ELECTRONIC ARTS

➔ **What we know:** With EA's countless development studios all hard at work, the phrase "full plate" doesn't begin to describe the company's E3 lineup. For starters, a huge collection of 2005 sports titles will be showcased, as well as *Def Jam Vendetta 2*. EA also has a strong strategy-heavy PC lineup, including the fantasy RTS *Armies of Exigo*, *Black & White II*, and yet another RTS based on the ever-popular *Lord of the Rings* franchise, titled *The Battle for Middle-earth*. And let's not forget *The Sims 2*. PC shooter fans can look forward

to *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*, while the console crowd will be getting *Battlefield Modern Combat* for PS2 and the multiplatform *GoldenEye 2*—the sequel to what many gamers hail as the greatest console shooter of all time. EA will also be showing off racing sequel *Burnout 3*, as well as multiplatform movie licenses based on the upcoming *Catwoman* and *Harry Potter* films. Don't forget *Ultima X: Odyssey*, either.

**What we've heard:** With a new console-exclusive *Battlefield* title, we'd

be surprised if EA doesn't also have something for PC. There's also been talk about the recently announced *Marvel vs. EA* fighting game, as well as a few hints of another *Sim City*.



## SONY



➔ **What we know:** Most of what we know about SCEA's PlayStation 2 E3 lineup is nothing new. Previously announced titles that will be making an appearance at the show include *Gran Turismo 4*, *Killzone*, *Sly 2: Band of Thieves*, *God of War*, and *Hot Shots Golf Fore!* The dynamic duo of platform-action gaming—*Jak 3* [that's Arabic numeral 3] and the recently subtitled *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal*—should also make a big splash. The only previously unannounced title on our radar is a sequel to *The Getaway*. Meanwhile, Sony Online Entertainment is all about *EverQuest II*—although it also mentioned something recently that should make

plenty of folks eager for some hack-and-slash action: an upcoming *Champions of Norrath* PS2 sequel, titled *Champions: Return to Arms*.

**What we've heard:** Sony's been extremely evasive about its upcoming PSP handheld. There's bound to be some new information on it at E3, maybe even a look at the unit's actual design—although with the recent announcement that it's been delayed until 2005, who knows? Then there's that slick-looking PSX system...is that thing ever coming out here? Sony likes to make a splash at E3, so it seems likely that the company has some surprises in store for its massive preshow press conference.

## MICROSOFT

➔ **What we know:** Microsoft has three big titles for this year's E3, and—surprise—they're all Xbox exclusives! First, we have designer Peter Molyneux's action-RPG epic *Fable*, which promises players a lifelike, open-ended, constantly evolving world to explore. Despite the recent loss of its multiplayer mode, the game is still looking quite good. Next up is the BioWare-developed martial arts RPG *Jade Empire*, which—if it's anything like the company's previous effort, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*—should be worth keeping an eye on. Finally, the

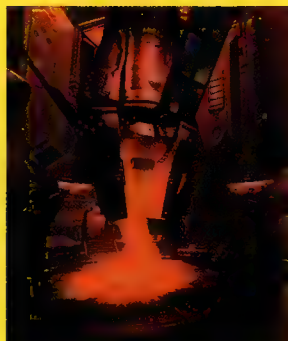
ever-delayed *Halo 2* should be making another appearance.

**What we've heard:** Although it's unconfirmed at this point, we just might be seeing the PC RPG sequel *Dungeon Siege II*, and there's also been talk about the "next step" for the *Age of Empires* series. And while we're not holding our breath, maybe we'll hear some real info on Xbox 2. While the three known Xbox titles are all potential killer apps, we know that Microsoft's hunger to smash Sony means that more games will be announced. And what's up with Rare?





## ACTIVISION



➔ **What we know:** Activision's big E3 title is, of course, *Doom 3*—hopefully, there will be something more than a looping demo video this time around. It's got a few other choice goodies in store for us, including *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, which is an expansion to last year's award-winning military shooter, and *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*, a multiplatform, console-exclusive entry in the franchise. Also making appearances on PC will be the *Half-Life 2*-engine-based shooter *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines*, the

upcoming Hollywood simulator *The Movies*, and the historically based RTS *Rome: Total War*. Console fans will be getting a look at the promising action-RPG *X-Men: Legends*, as well as *Spider-Man 2*, which will undoubtedly prove popular. Finally, a project called *Shark Tales* has been mentioned—and that's pretty much all we know about it.

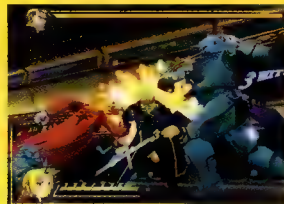
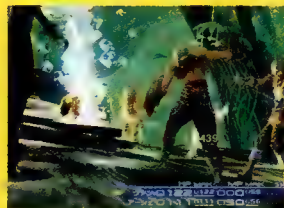
**What we've heard:** Maybe, just maybe, Activision will give us a solid *Doom 3* release date. Hey, stranger things have happened.

## SQUARE ENIX

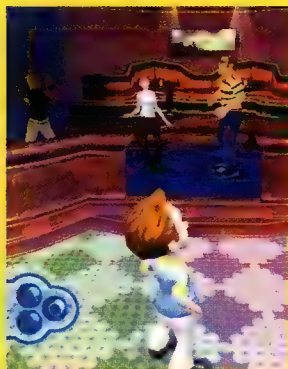
➔ **What we know:** Square Enix's big push this year is its ever-popular *Final Fantasy* and *Kingdom Hearts* franchises. More specifically, it'll be showing the upcoming *Final Fantasy XII* (which is currently slated for a North American release on PS2 sometime in 2005), the GBA *Kingdom Hearts* side story subtitled *Chain of Memories*, and the upcoming *Final Fantasy VII* CGI sequel, *Advent Children*, which debuted at last year's Tokyo Game Show. In addition to these two titanic franchises, Square Enix has a few more PS2 titles on tap: On the RPG front, there's *Star Ocean: Till the End of Time* and *Fullmetal Alchemist*, which is based on the company's anime series. *Front*

*Mission 4*, the latest in the long-running strategy-game franchise, will be making its way Stateside as well. Square Enix's first-ever live U.S. concert, titled *Dear Friends: Music from Final Fantasy*, will also be making a big splash just prior to E3.

**What we've heard:** Where to begin? *Dragon Warrior VIII* is curiously absent from Square Enix's E3 roster, as is the PS2 *Kingdom Hearts* sequel. The lack of any *Final Fantasy XI* updates is also puzzling—certainly the good folks at Squenix have something in the pipeline. The disposition of *Advent Children* is still largely unexplained, and we're hoping it'll be cleared up for good.



## VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES



➔ **What we know:** Vivendi Universal's critical title this year is, once again, *Half-Life 2*. But the VUG collective certainly has much more in store for us: Its strategy-heavy (and sequel-heavy) PC lineup includes *Ground Control 2*, *Empire Earth 2*, the nefariously amusing *Evil Genius*, and the long-awaited follow-up to the *Tribes* franchise, *Tribes: Vengeance*. In terms of multiplatform titles, we should be seeing *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude*, *Men of Valor: Vietnam*, *Chronicles of Riddick*, *Van Helsing*, *Fight Club*, and *Red Ninja: End of Honor*. An unspecified *Predator*

game is in the cards, as is the action-adventure tag team of *Crash Twinsanity* and *Spyro Orange: The Cortex Conspiracy*—the former for consoles and the latter for GBA.

**What we've heard:** Word on the street says *Half-Life 2* just might be released this century. Perhaps we'll learn more during the show. Given the company's strong ties to the movies, we can't rule out any blockbuster games. What's up with that *Lord of the Rings* book license, too? It's come to roughly naught thus far. We'll know more soon.

## GAME FRENZY

## MIDWAY

➔ Midway is revisiting a few of its classic hits, with sequels to *NARC*, *Area 51*, and *Mortal Kombat* in the works—the latter two will be playable online. It will also be showing off the latest installment of its over-the-top baseball series, *MLB SlugFest: Loaded*, and the stealth-action sci-fi thriller *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy*. For the RPG fans out there, Midway will be bringing *Shadow Hearts 2 Stateside*. No word on the recently mentioned *Gauntlet* title, but we've been told not to expect it at E3.



## EIDOS INTERACTIVE

➔ *Backyard Wrestling 2* will be at the show, which will probably facilitate another full-size wrestling ring at the Eidos booth. Aside from the previously announced *Thief: Deadly Shadows* and *ShellShock: Nam '67*, info on Eidos' lineup is pretty sketchy. *25 to Life* and *Crash 'N Burn* are both being developed for PS2 and Xbox, and on the PC side, we'll be getting a first look at *Imperial Glory*. Finally, it's been revealed to us that a third *Deus Ex* game is on the way. Lara Croft is mysteriously absent from this year's roster.





## STAR POWER

### ACCLAIM

➔ Acclaim's big titles this year include the multiplatform street racer *Juiced*, the comic-inspired action-adventure *100 Bullets* (penned by DC Comics scribe Brian Azzarello), the promising *The Red Star*, and the PS2 and Xbox wrestling sequel *Showdown: Legends of Wrestling*.

### ATARI

➔ We're pretty short on Atari information, but one thing you can definitely expect to see is its upcoming PS2 adventure *Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone*.

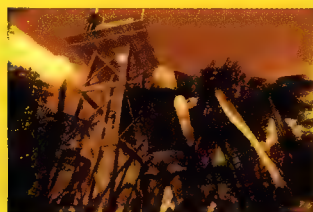


### ROCKSTAR GAMES

➔ The only definite Rockstar E3 title we were able to nail down is the PC version of *Manhunt*. Of course, we would be totally shocked if *GTA: San Andreas* failed to make an appearance, and a big splash.

### UBISOFT

➔ Ubisoft's quiet on the E3 console front, except for *Far Cry Instincts* for Xbox. We've managed to procure a list of PC titles, which includes *Silent Hunter III*, *Myst Revelation*, *Chessmaster X*, *Pacific Fighters*, and *Alexander the Great*.



## KONAMI

➔ **What we know:** Two words: *Sneak Eater*. As goofy as its subtitle might sound, *Metal Gear Solid 3* is going to be big, and Konami has done an impressive job of keeping a tight lid on its plot details. Besides the latest adventures of Solid Snake (or whoever he is), Konami will have plenty of other titles on hand—*DDR Extreme* and *Karaoke Revolution Vol. 2* are imminent, as are *Silent Hill 4*, *Suikoden III*, *Ys VI*, *Gradius V*, and *Neo Contra*. Konami is also working on a new, all-female wrestling game called *Rumble Rose*, as well as

*Nanobreaker*, an upcoming action title that is being developed by Koji Igarashi, the producer of the *Castlevania* series. They'll also be showing *Enthusia*—flip forward a few pages for the deets.

**What we've heard:** Expect lots of *Yu-Gi-Oh!*-related announcements... we know you're pumped for that. Keeping up with tradition, Konami will likely dominate the show floor with a crazy big MGS video, bringing traffic to a halt and gobbling up a good chunk of E3 mindshare in the face of stiff competition.



## CAPCOM



➔ **What we know:** *Mega Man X Command Mission*, a multiplatform RPG set in the classic *Mega Man X* universe, is shaping up to be yet another interesting and quirky divergence for the schizophrenic series. *Mega Man Battle Network* fans will also get a look at the series' fourth GBA sequel, while the remaining remnants of the infamous GameCube-exclusive "Capcom Five"—namely *Killer 7* and the highly anticipated survival-horror sequel *Resident Evil 4*—should be getting some airtime as well. The rest of Capcom's lineup looks to be a handful of PS2-exclusive titles,

including *Shadow of Rome*, Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the online action game *Monster Hunter*, and the sequel to one of the biggest sleepers in recent memory, *Way of the Samurai 2*.

**What we've heard:** Rumors of a new *Street Fighter* game have been running rampant for quite a while, but there is one confirmed title that we're hoping for some solid info on: *Sammy vs. Capcom*, which will allegedly be a head-to-head battle between the cast of Sammy Studios' *Guilty Gear* franchise and a collection of iconic Capcom characters.

## LUCASARTS

➔ **What we know:** We should be getting a good look at *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic—The Sith Lords*, which is the sequel to last year's phenomenally successful *Star Wars* RPG for Xbox and PC. *Star Wars* shooters will be out in full force at E3; *Star Wars Battlefront*, a squad-based tactical FPS à la *Battlefield 1942*, is due to make an appearance along with the dark, military-oriented *Star Wars Republic Commando* (also multiplatform). Finally, we'll be getting a glimpse at a possible future North Korea in the open-ended console action game *Mercenaries*,

which puts you in the shoes of soldiers fighting in the devastated country, letting you choose whether you're for or against the regime.

**What we've heard:** With the recent cancellation of *Sam & Max: Freelance Police*, the chances of seeing any new graphic adventures at E3 are slim to none. On the other hand, LucasArts seems to be concentrating heavily on *Star Wars*—and with *Episode III* right around the corner, who knows what kinds of games we might see? The titles we know about now are impressive already.



XB

PC

PS2

GBA

GC



NINTENDO  
KNOWLEDGETHEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO!

MARK MACDONALD

## CONVERTED

➔ Some among you, oh my brothers and sisters, may remember my attitude toward Nintendo's connectivity concept: I mocked it as gimmicky. I spurned it as superfluous. I cast down games like *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* that require Game Boy Advances and link cables for each player. But now I am here to tell you, brothers and sisters, that I have seen the light! I have been reborn! Glory be, praise *Zelda*!

That's right. For I was lost, and it was *Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* that found me. Finally, the promised game, one that incorporates linked GBAs as a critical part of gameplay—any of the four teammates can separate from the group, exploring houses or caves on their own GBA screen. The feature has been expertly woven into dungeons, puzzles, and even boss fights. Look beyond the dated 2D graphics and you'll find a unique mix of co-op and competitive gameplay that you can only get with all the players in the same room. (After all, it's hard to punch someone in the arm for stealing your treasure on Xbox Live.) Sure, I still miss online play—getting together three buddies, GBAs, and link cables requires planning—but at least Nintendo has finally proven connectivity is more than just a marketing buzzword. Hallelujah! 🎮

Mark MacDonald is executive editor at *Electronic Gaming Monthly*.

## [TALENT]

## \* CHRIS CHARLA

## THE LIFE BEHIND DEATH, JR.

➔ This year's Game Developers Conference gave us a glimpse at the capabilities of Sony's PSP. Now that we've seen an actual game for the system, we need to know more. So we nabbed senior producer Chris Charla, who showed off *Backbone Entertainment's Death, Jr.* during Sony's keynote.

**GMR:** When we first saw *Death, Jr.*, it was on Xbox. Why switch to PSP?

**CC:** We didn't want *DJ* to get lost in the shuffle, so a launch title seemed ideal. We put together a series of white papers on PSP before we got the emulator and were intrigued by its unique features, like hardware morphing and spline patches, so that helped make the decision, too.

**GMR:** Isn't creating a game that's not based on a license pretty risky?

**CC:** Launching a new character isn't easy, but luckily it seems like *DJ*'s appealing to everyone who sees him. And we think we've developed an innovative—and fun—combat system. This isn't a game where you seek out your enemies—they come to you, *Robotron* style.

**GMR:** What's your retort to those who say the game looks too "kiddy"? Why did

you guys decide on that look?

**CC:** They haven't seen the design doc! *DJ* is strongly influenced by underground comics, where even things that look cute can turn out to be deadly. Think of Johnny the Homicidal Maniac or Invader Zim or any of the stuff Ted Naifeh (who's doing the *DJ* comic) has done. *DJ*'s main weapons are a giant scythe and twin pistols—it's pretty hard to dispatch demons in a cute way with those. This is going to be an intense, gory game.

**GMR:** What's your favorite thing about the game?

**CC:** My favorite thing about *DJ*, personally, is that he's a reject! He's not some save-the-world type with big muscles. He's just kind of a loser who makes good. I also love the fact that he's not trying to save the world out of altruism, but just so he won't get grounded. Oh, and the combat, which is awesome.

**GMR:** Tell us something about *Death, Jr.* that no one else knows.

**CC:** He has asthma. 🎮

PLAYSTATION  
KNOWLEDGETHEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO!

JOHN DAVISON

## PSP WHAT?

➔ So the first game we get to see on PSP is *Backbone's Death, Jr.*? Within the development community at GDC in San Jose last month, it was certainly a significant demonstration of what a joy the PSP is for developers—but was it selling the system short for the rest of us? Probably.

Many effects shown on the 10-foot screen were impressive for a handheld to produce, but the lack of anything for us to relate to means that its true power is still a bit of a mystery. All the fancy lighting, deformable geometry, and alpha-blended, curved-surfaced hoojamaflaps in the world aren't a substitute for showing a PSP running a recognizable franchise in tiny 16:9 widescreen juiciness.

Chances are, on May 11 you'll be able to log on to [www.1UP.com](http://www.1UP.com) and see just that. News that the PSP is able to run versions of many of the development tools that make PS2 games possible has fueled rumors of some truly tasty games in the works, with some kind of *Grand Theft Auto* game at the very top of that list. There's also word of a new *Burnout* and a new *Metal Gear* from Kojima, possibly a redux similar to *Twin Snakes*. When we see these things running, we'll be able to see whether word that "the PSP is comparable to the PS2" is true or not. 🎮

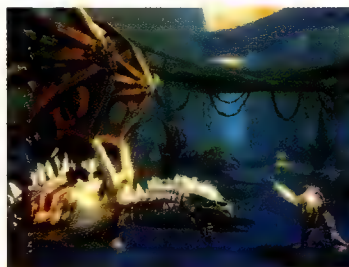
John Davison is editor-in-chief of the Official U.S. *PlayStation Magazine*.

## GUILD WARS AT E3

## NCSOFT HOSTS LIVE DEBUT OF MMORPG

U.S.A.

➔ NCSoft's upcoming multiplayer online role-playing game, *Guild Wars*, is set to make a big splash at this year's E3 Expo. The company's plans call for a live massive demo of the game, and it's inviting everyone to join in—and we mean everyone. The development team at ArenaNet will release a *Guild Wars* beta client over the Web just prior to E3, making it freely available to anyone who wants to try the game out. Its goal: 200,000 gamers waging war during the E3 convention period.



More info at [www.guildwars.com](http://www.guildwars.com)



# FIRST LOOK

DIGITAL GRAPHICS GO TO THE EXTREME ON PS3

CANADA

**Digital Extremes, the Canadian development house formed in 1993 that's responsible for such hits as *Unreal*, *Unreal Tournament*, and, uh, *Unreal Championship*, is back on the block with not one, but two new games in the works.**

First up for release sometime in 2004 is the first-person shooter *Pariah* (shown in the screenshots below), currently slated for Xbox and PC. Published by Canada-based Groove Games, *Pariah* utilizes the latest iteration of the *Unreal* engine technology and is purported to be Digital Extremes' most ambitious project yet.

Further off on the release schedule but just as exciting is the recently announced PS3 (and possibly, Xbox 2) title *Dark Sector*. We here at GMR

love to shoot things full of laser holes, and based on the brief trailer Digital Extremes sent our way, we couldn't be more excited about the potential of its first next-next-next-generation action game. One reason why we're excited is because of that image to the right. See the detail, the nice lighting, and the overall high quality of the character? That's an actual in-game model from the PS3 build of the game. Considering the game itself won't be out until at least 2006 (that's when Sony Computer Entertainment Europe President and COO David Reeves says PS3 will launch), we expect the final results to be even more stunning. *Dark Sector* has piqued the interest of multiple publishers, and based on what little we've seen, we don't expect it to stay on the open market for long. **IC**



→ Unchained from their obligations to Atari, and the *Unreal* series, Digital Extremes is wasting no time whipping out its own intellectual properties. Regarding *Pariah*, which has been in the works for two years, DE founder James Schmalz says, "Working with Groove Games is a breath of fresh air. They share our vision for creating the best game possible, which is our intention for every game we make. *Pariah* is our most ambitious project to date and with Groove's support, it will reach its full potential."



XB

PC



**XBOX  
KNOWLEDGE**  
THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO!



EVAN SHAWMON

## BAD SPIRITS

➔ With the recent departure of Ed Fries, Microsoft Game Studios' vice president, there were bound to be some changes. Little did anyone realize that these changes would come as swiftly as they have...or that they would be as disappointing as they are.

In the past few weeks, Microsoft has dropped three anticipated videogames with independent spirits from its 2004 roster. The victims are as follows: The *Zelda-meets-Invader Zim Psychonauts*; Microforté's *Citizen Zero*, a massively multiplayer *Halo*-style affair allowing thousands of players to inhabit the same online universe; and *Oddworld Inhabitants'* next opus, a sequel to Xbox launch title *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*.

There's something infinitely depressing about all of the cuts when taken as a whole. There's little doubt in my mind that each of these games will indeed find new publishers, but that's missing the point. In dropping them from its own roster, Microsoft has lost a great deal of credibility from both the press and the community and has put a severe dent in the perceived success of the independent spirit as it exists in the game industry today. If anyone can afford to take risks, it's Microsoft; I'm just hoping this doesn't signal a turn for the worse. ☹

Shawmon is a writer for *IGN* and *GameSpot*.

# GMR CHARTS

TOP-SELLING GAMES FOR EVERY SYSTEM FOR MARCH 04

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## TOP 10 ALL FORMATS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT	SCORE
01	 <b>NINJA GAIDEN</b> Assassinating Xbox gamers everywhere.	XB	9
02	 <b>MVP BASEBALL 2004</b> As far as EA's concerned, that's Most Valuable Product.	PS2	9
03	 <b>SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW</b> A box opened by many.	XB	9
04	 <b>POKÉMON COLOSSEUM</b> Tell the truth—did you buy it?	GC	8
05	 <b>BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM</b> It's not your father's war. Oh, wait.	PC	9
06	 <b>UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004</b> It's like an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. Wait, that's real life.	PC	8
07	 <b>FINAL FANTASY XI</b> Hard drive included. Spare time destroyed.	PS2	9
08	 <b>METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES</b> They're remaking the success, too.	GC	9
09	 <b>MVP BASEBALL 2004</b> Xbox gamers can't live by the sword alone.	XB	9
10	 <b>HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE</b> We bet a lot of <i>UT2004</i> players bought this one, too.	GC	8

\*Denotes equivalent score by sister publication, *Computer Gaming World*.  
NR=Not Reviewed.

## PS2 TOP 10

01	<b>MVP BASEBALL 2004</b>	9
02	<b>FINAL FANTASY XI</b>	9
03	<b>DRAKENGARD</b>	6
04	<b>JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING</b>	8
05	<b>THE SUFFERING</b>	5
06	<b>RISE TO HONOR</b>	6
07	<b>MX UNLEASHED</b>	6
08	<b>CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH</b>	8
09	<b>GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM</b>	7
10	<b>NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND</b>	9

## XBOX TOP 10

01	<b>NINJA GAIDEN</b>	9
02	<b>SPLINTER CELL</b>	9
03	<b>MVP BASEBALL 2004</b>	9
04	<b>THE SUFFERING</b>	5
05	<b>MAFIA</b>	7
06	<b>JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING</b>	8
07	<b>HALO</b>	10
08	<b>COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04</b>	7
09	<b>TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS</b>	6
10	<b>DEAD MAN'S HAND</b>	4

## PC TOP 10

01	<b>BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM</b>	9
02	<b>UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004</b>	8
03	<b>FAR CRY</b>	7
04	<b>UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004: SE</b>	8
05	<b>SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW</b>	9
06	<b>COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO</b>	5
07	<b>FINAL FANTASY XI</b>	9
08	<b>SACRED</b>	NR
09	<b>LORDS OF THE REALM III</b>	NR
10	<b>RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD</b>	7*

## GBA TOP 10

01	<b>SUPER MARIO BROS 3: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4</b>	9
02	<b>METROID: ZERO MISSION</b>	9
03	<b>MARIO &amp; LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SABA</b>	9
04	<b>YU-GI-OH! WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2004</b>	NR
05	<b>POKÉMON SAPHIRE VERSION</b>	7
06	<b>POKÉMON RUBY VERSION</b>	7
07	<b>FIRE EMBLEM</b>	8
08	<b>FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE</b>	9
09	<b>HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN</b>	8
10	<b>THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ALTP</b>	9

## GC TOP 10

01	<b>POKÉMON COLOSSEUM</b>	8
02	<b>METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES</b>	9
03	<b>HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE</b>	8
04	<b>FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES</b>	8
05	<b>MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!</b>	10
06	<b>JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING</b>	8
07	<b>MVP BASEBALL 2004</b>	9
08	<b>PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EPISODE III</b>	6
09	<b>SONIC HEROES</b>	7
10	<b>SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE</b>	9



# MAXIS REVAMPS

THE SIMS GROW UP—AND MOVE TO THE CITY

U.S.A.

Maxis has revealed the premise behind its next *Sims* game for consoles, this time focusing on big-city living. The as-yet-untitled game is slated for a fall release and features a faster motives game, new power socials that let you win friends, new ways to make a living, and no more waiting for your Sim to come home from work. This go-round also has a subway system to explore—rat content unknown.

The company is also readying *The Sims 2* for PC, which promises new strides in realism. Not only do the Sims age through a lifetime and endure realistic fattening and wrinkling, they also pass on their DNA to their offspring. A new 3D engine allows for better viewing of details, from being able to see food in the fridge to discerning facial expressions. Also debuting is filmmaker mode, in which you can film dramas of your own creation. **LE**



→ Will Darryl ever leave his videogame to pass on his DNA in the *Sims 2* for PC (below left)? A street performer annoys a Sim outside the subway in the next console version (above).



More info at [www.eagames.com](http://www.eagames.com)

# RE-MARK OF KRI

SONY PREPARES A SEQUEL TO A SLEEPER

U.S.A.



*The Mark of Kri* scored big accolades from the press when it was released—problem is, it didn't make as big of a splash as Sony had hoped with gamers at large. Fear was that a sequel wouldn't be in the making, but fear no longer. Sony is preparing *Rise of the Kasai* (working title).

The game features *Kri* hero Rau and his trusty bird pal Kuzo, as well as a new character, Rau's little sister Tati. The story opens 10 years after the close of *Kri*, beginning with Rau's death. Working backward, you play through significant events in Rau's life, trying to piece together what led to his untimely demise. You'll actually get a chance to travel back to 10 years before *Kri* took place, too. The original's emphasis on in-level puzzles is being retained. Sony is also preparing co-op online multiplayer to round out *Kasai*. **LE**

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PC  
KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



JEFF GREEN

## RENAISSANCE

➔ Whadd'ya know! The "second generation" of massive multiplayer online role-playing games is finally arriving, and it's not sucking! After wasting precious hours of my life on *EverQuest* and *Dark Age of Camelot*, I have become increasingly jaded with MMORPGs—wishing, in fact, that the genre would just go away. Once you've done one level treadmill, why do another?

But, finally, some developers are beginning to figure it out and actually come up with ways to make these games fun again. This month, I've been lucky enough to play two MMOs—NCsoft's *City of Heroes* and Blizzard's *World of Warcraft*—and even in their unfinished states, both games are a blast and mark a huge leap forward for this genre.

What are they doing that other MMOs have not done? Simple: They've added actual gameplay. Goals. Quests. Reasons to play other than leveling up. Both also benefit from not being too arcane and snooty—not assuming you've already invested 800 hours on games like these—and take the time to get newbies going without being too easy or condescending. Both constantly reward players with goodies and, just as important, do not impose harsh penalties for failure. It's good game design, plain and simple—and for this genre, it's about damn time. ☛

Jeff Green is editor-in-chief of *Computer Gaming World* magazine.



➔ The excellent physics system in *Enthusia* is only one of the game's many selling points. The innovative controls, the wealth of tracks and cars, and the gorgeous car and background graphics also help. We played it. We love it.



## FIRST LOOK

ENTER ENTHUSIA. KONAMI'S GRAN TURISMO KILLER

JAPAN

➔ We can't help it. Whenever a new racing game is announced, we tend to react with glazed-over eyes and a thin line of drool spooling off of our lips. After all, we've seen nearly every publisher roll out its own take on the *Gran Turismo* formula (licensed cars, tracks, pretty graphics, etc.) without really adding anything to the equation. Konami's *Enthusia* for PS2, though, might be the game to change all that.

Interestingly, the biggest weapon Konami has in the race against Sony's

flagship driver is producer Manabu Akita. If the name seems unfamiliar, perhaps the work this former Namco designer did on the groundbreaking title *Rage Racer* will resonate. That said, despite the *Rage Racer* association, *Enthusia* leans more toward *Gran Turismo*'s slice of the pie, with over 200 real-world cars, including Lupin the 3rd's favorite classic ride, the Fiat 500, as well as some of the most famous *James Bond* cars, according to Akita. While the overall selection of cars isn't as bloated as

*GT4*'s, *Enthusia*'s team chose cars that enthusiasts would really want to drive, meaning the catalog of vehicles won't include 50 different minivans.

Track selection for this one- or two-player game will top the 50 mark, a far cry from *Rage Racer*'s three tracks. An innovative new information interface complements the rock-steady controls, providing the user with the input he needs to become a better racer. You'll have to wait, though, as *Enthusia* doesn't ship until March 2005. ☛

## [BLIPS]

## Unreal levels up

➔ At the recent GDC, Epic stole the show with its Unreal 3.0 engine. It uses a technique called normal mapping to create detailed objects with few polygons and characters that approach *LOTR*-quality CG monsters in real time. Expect Epic's first Unreal 3.0 game in 2006.

## A new type of game rating

➔ Activision and Nielsen (the company behind TV ratings) have announced plans to create an in-game ad rating system. The system would track players' reaction to product placement in games, which Nielsen maintains gamers already find favorable.



水



I TEST MYSELF BY TESTING OTHERS. KAIJUDO.

自



Catch the Action On  
**CARTOON NETWORK**

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# GAMEPLANNER

## MAY 2004

### CONGRATS. COLLEGE GRADS! NOW GET TO WORK

ALL RELEASE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. SO IT'S NOT OUR FAULT!

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

01

Welcome to May! If you look on your left, you'll find Mother's Day. On your right is E3, and just below that is your complimentary towel. Enjoy your stay!

02

**03** *Shrek 2: The Game* (GC, PS2, XB) is out today. And we hear that *Shrek 2: The Movie: The Game: The Ride* opens at Six Flags locations all across the country.

09

You better call your mother today, because without her, you wouldn't be here. It's a scientific fact. You see, when a daddy and mommy love each other very much...

16

**17** This is when we realize that we have to wait many more months before playing all the new E3 games. *GMR* = sad.

23

24

25

GBA gets some late May lovin' in the form of *River City Ransom EX* and *Mario vs. Donkey Kong*

30

31

06

Random information: There have been five *Beethoven* movies since the original starring Charles Grodin. *Five*.

Who watches these?

05

**04** *Future Tactics* (GC, XB), *Metal Slug 3* (XB), *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain* (PS2), *RalliSport Challenge 2* (XB), *Soldier* (PC), *La Pucelle* (PS2). We wouldn't list 'em if they weren't out.

11

Out: *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* (GBA, GC, PS2), *Transformers* (PS2), *True Crime* (PC). Also, Sony and Nintendo have their E3 press conferences today. Hello, PSP and DS!

18

19

Who releases a game the week after E3?

Seriously?

26

27

07

...open today?

*Samurai Warriors* is now available for PS2, and in a stunning and unexpected marketing move, *Van Helsing* is also out across all platforms. Wait, doesn't the movie...

13

As you read this, we'll be playing *Metroid Prime 2*, *Halo 2*, and *Metal Gear Solid 3*. Don't worry, we'll report back. Probably.

20

21

Can Mike Myers' career bounce back from the horrific monstrosity that was *The Cat in the Hat*? We shall see: *Shrek 2* is now at a theater near you.

28

If you knew that the world ended tomorrow, what would you do today? *The Day After Tomorrow* opens today. Today, you should go see it; tomorrow, you should talk about it.



08

15

It's the Saturday of E3 week, also known as "I'm never going to E3 again."

See you next year!



22



29



Ninja Gaiden • Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow • Unreal Tournament 2004 • Battlefield Vietnam • Fight Night 2004 • Call of Duty • Far Cry • Dead or Alive Ultimate • Rainbow Six 3 • Halo • Unreal II • Rallisport Challenge • Wheel Battalion • MTX: Mototrax • Tenchu: Return from Darkness • True Crime • Tony Hawk's Underground • America's Army: Special Forces • Soul Calibur • Project Gotham Racing 2 • Top Spin • Amped • ESPN MLB Baseball • ESPN NFL Football • ESPN NBA Basketball • NVIDIA PC Gaming Zone

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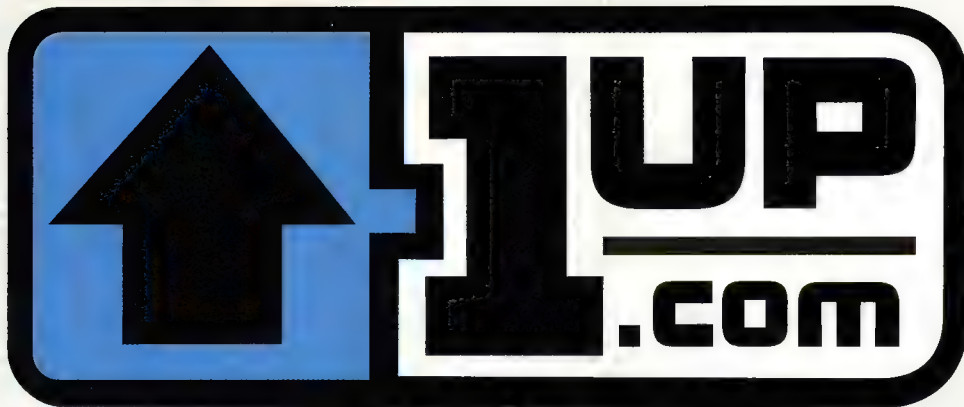
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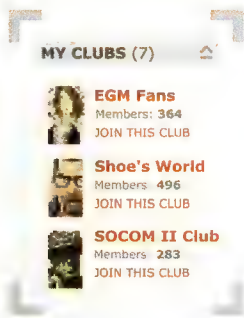






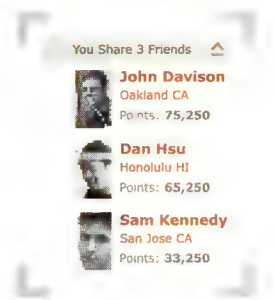
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# NEXT

WARNING! HAZARDOUS MATERIAL



Here at *GMR*, we preview games a little differently. To ensure that our previews are as relevant as possible, we feature only titles that will be released within six months. We also record our level of excitement about each game with cool little flames. Previews are not reviews—they're merely a guide as to how good a game in progress is looking. They're snapshots. If we're not very excited about a game, it gets one or two flames. If we're taking a wait-and-see attitude, expect to see three flames. Over and above that, you can bet we're pretty excited. It's our duty to tell you what we think at every stage of a game's development cycle—positive, negative, or somewhere in between.

## INCOMING GAMES PREVIEWED

### PREVIEWED THIS ISSUE:

ATHENS 2004	PS2	048
BUJINGAI	PS2	051
DOOM 3	PC/XB	057
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC: THE SITH LORDS	PC/XB	053
LINEAGE II	PC	046
MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR	GBA	052
MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG	GBA	052
MONSTER HUNTER	PS2	041
PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY	PS2/XB	045
PUYO POP FEVER	GC/XB	047
RED DEAD REVOLVER	PS2/XB	044
SHELLSHOCK	PC/PS2/XB	056
SUDEKI	XB	050
TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2	GC/PC/PS2/XB	055
VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE—BLOODLINES	PC	054
XENOSAGA II	PS2	058





RELEASE | AUGUST

# MONSTER HUNTER

FANTASY. 'SAURS. ONLINE

□ SYSTEM PS2 □ PUBLISHER CAPCOM □ DEVELOPER CAPCOM



*Phantasy Star Online's* a great game and all, but if you've already invested over 300 hours in its various versions, it might be getting just a little old. The concept of four-player cooperative online adventuring will never die, though, and Capcom's *Monster Hunter* has arrived just in time to pick up the slack.

No-tech in comparison to *PSO's* high-tech, *Monster Hunter* puts you in the shoes of a Bronze Age warrior out to make his living the only way he (or she—every class has male and female

variants) knows how: hunting and gathering. As the strongest member of your village, it's up to you to feed your small tribe, not to mention keep yourself alive. The village elder assigns you missions to complete, and you've got to do them or die trying.

It helps to pick a warrior class that has a playing style you're comfortable with when trying to carry out these missions. The general concept for each class is familiar—well rounded, big swords, weak but fast, etc.—but in a neat twist, each

class actually controls somewhat differently. The big-sword guys have a number of unique slashing combos you can pull off with the right analog stick, while the lancers can only poke forward but have a unique charging move that's both offensive and defensive in nature, and the bow users are the only ones to get a first-person view for precision aiming. It's a cut above the mere statistical adjustments between classes in most games, and it ought to go a long way toward boosting the game's replay

value—though it's arguable whether *Monster Hunter* even needs replay value, since it's already hip deep in things you're able to do around its verdant fields. You can customize your own weapons and armor with animal parts you scavenge from fallen monsters, go fishing off the piers in the towns, and, of course, tackle the 100 or so missions available to play.

Of those missions, we've played some hunt-and-destroy and retrieval varieties so far. All were timed, which wasn't such a big deal in the hunt-

PS2





→ Customization in *Monster Hunter* is more progressive than it is in similar games, like *PSO Ep. III*. The tougher the monster, the rarer the parts. You'll know a n00b from a pro just by his outfit. Wicked.



and-destroy missions, since they were a simple matter of splitting up into two teams of two and taking the map section by section. More taxing was the retrieval mission, given the unique nature of the items we had to bring back: three wyvern's eggs guarded by the large and high-invincible wyvern itself.

To successfully get an egg from the wyvern, it's necessary to use teamwork. The person carrying the egg—and you can carry only one at a time—can't attack, jump, or move

very fast, so his teammates have to work double time to defend him, lest the monsters in the field break the egg. The best plan of attack is to let one party member use an immobilization trap to keep the dragon occupied until the egg carrier can hustle out of the monster's lair, with one or two members acting as bodyguards for the carrier at all times. The remaining member can be a floating troubleshooter in case the wyvern—which can move between field areas

at will—or other lesser monsters present a problem.

The final game promises many such teamwork-intensive scenarios, though all the missions can still be played solo. Still, our advice is to prepare yourself now to join a tribe as the August release approaches—you'll want all the help you can get. **B+**

**GMA SAYS** → We're ditching our GameCube broadband adapters for *Monster Hunter*.

→ HOW HOT... **B+**

## SLAP STICK

Unlike *Phantasy Star Online*, *Monster Hunter* lets you hit your comrades with wild swings and errant shots. Some classes, like the heavy broadsword wielders, can really send teammates flying with certain combos. The good news is that although you can knock your fellow monster hunters around, you can't actually hurt them, and indeed, some classes (like the bow users) can even use special ammunition to heal teammates from a distance. One caveat, though: Be careful where you point that thing, or some missions (like delicate egg-carrying jobs) could end in tears. **B-**



## BRONZE CHEF

When you're running low on stamina and don't have any food prepared to chow down on, try cooking your own. Every character comes equipped with a spit to roast meat on, so if the coast is clear, you can sit down at your leisure and use it. Pay attention to the goofy music that plays, though—it's your cue to take the meat off the barbie. Do it right, and you'll get well-cooked meat; do it wrong, and you'll get a burnt, foul-tasting lump. **B-**

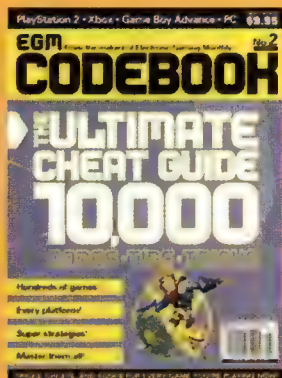




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RELEASE | MAY

# RED DEAD REVOLVER

RETURN THAT TOMBSTONE

□ SYSTEM PS2/XB □ PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR □ DEVELOPER ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO



→ *Red Dead* looks to be a rootin' good time. From the excellent work the team has done with the Old West visage to the six-shootin' action, we expect big things out of this one.

The story behind *Red Dead Revolver* could practically be a Western in itself: Abandoned and left for dead by Capcom last year, this third-person action game by Angel Studios-cum-Rockstar San Diego was picked up and saved by Rockstar proper. We can't say for sure if *RDR* is back for revenge against its former owner, considering it's an inanimate object and all, but we can say that if John Wayne ever had the chance to play videogames, he'd probably like this one.

The titular main character, Red, is

driven by vengeance. You see, discovering gold tends to draw a lot of attention, and unfortunately for Red, this means the wholesale murder of his family. Such a thing is not to be taken lightly, so Red turns vigilante and becomes a bounty hunter, which allows him to not only sustain himself financially, but also be privy to vital information about the perpetrators.

Back in those days, bounty hunters...well, they shot people. Lots of people. Red, as well as the five other playable characters you'll meet in the

game, is controlled using the left analog stick for movement and the right stick for aiming. You'll have a variety of weapons at your disposal, all of which are fairly accurate to the era (six-shooters and shotguns, natch). The use of cover is just as important in staying alive as is wild running and gunning, although the latter is undoubtedly more fun. Also fun: Each character possesses a special ability that aids him in battle. For instance, Red's Dead Eye specialty slows down time enough to let you select multiple

areas on a single target, then unleashes whatever Red has left in the chamber. General Diego, a character you play during a flashback sequence, can throw signal flares...a fairly innocuous attack until the heavy artillery makes its presence known.

With a distinct Western look and flavor, *Red Dead Revolver* rises from the grave in May. ☛

**GMA SAYS** → Suddenly, we have this odd craving for spaghetti.

→ HOW HOT...!



XB

PS2



**INCOMING GAMES**  
psi-ops the mindgate conspiracy



RELEASE | JUNE

# PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

## A TERRIBLE THING TO LAY WASTE

SYSTEM PS2/XB PUBLISHER MIDWAY DEVELOPER MIDWAY

The hand that rocks the cradle pales in comparison to the brain that lets the body shoot fire from its hands. In Midway's *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* for both PlayStation 2 and Xbox, aptly named protagonist Nick Stryer takes mind over matter to an entirely new destructive level as he tears through a terrorist conglomerate called the Movement.

A psychic warrior in the employ of Uncle Sam and a hero in a 3D third-person-perspective adventure, Stryer sees his powers develop slowly over the course of *Conspiracy*. Initially, he'll need to rely on guns and hand-to-hand combat to thump foes, but he soon develops six fearsome brain-based attacks and psychic skills. It's here the game separates itself from the—pardon the pun—mindless rabble.

Objects can be picked up and moved—or hurled with destructive

force—using telekinesis. Stryer can set things ablaze with pyrokinesis or kill foes by draining their mental energy. He'll also be able to possess almost anyone he sees; by taking control of an enemy's body, he can project his mind remotely to view areas without actually being there, and he can use his special senses to see things such as cloaked enemies.

Bowl enemies over using telekinesis. Set a goon on fire and then pick him up and hurt him into a wall—or better still, chuck him into his very flammable goon friends. Take control of a soldier and use him as a human shield or make him empty his machine gun into his comrades. Surf on a floating crate over an obstacle. Stryer's mind has endless potential for those willing to be creative. **E**

**GMA SAYS** → Feed your head. Or consider yourself brain dead.

→ HOW HOT...



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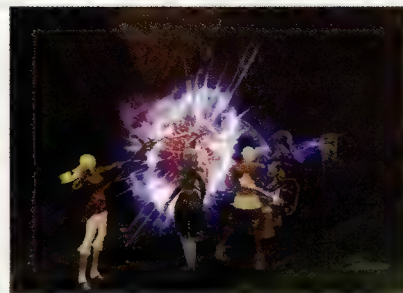


RELEASE | APRIL

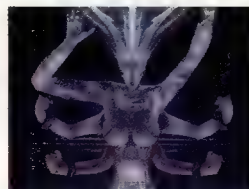
# LINEAGE II

## ADVENTURES IN ANOTHER PSEUDO-TOLKIENIA

□ SYSTEM PC □ PUBLISHER NCSoft □ DEVELOPER NCSoft



→ People love dragons (for at least that's what our recent survey says), and in *Lineage II* you get to raise your own dragon, which other MMORPGs currently lack. Back atcha!



**You know the deal. It's got elves, dwarves, orcs, mountains of equipment, hordes of monsters, and endless quests. MMORPGs are a dime a dozen these days, but NCsoft hopes to distinguish itself from the crowd by bringing us a gaming experience rarely seen in the U.S.**

*Lineage II* seems to be mildly complex. It takes place in a politically charged environment with three rival kingdoms and five player races. Each race has unique homelands and specialties: Dwarves craft items; orcs

are fearsome fighters, and so on. Newbies are initially restricted to one of two classes (fighter or mystic). As you advance, the classes branch out and allow more opportunities for customization.

Though typical in its generic fantasy setting, *Lineage II* is quite original in its gameplay. This Korean import is designed with massive player-versus-player conflicts in mind and strives to foster a sense of community offered by few other games. All *Lineage II* servers will allow

PVP. To prevent griefing, there's a karma system that tracks player behavior and marks those who kill innocents. Still, you'll get to see the cool stuff only if you form clans and participate in the political system. With a clan, you can perform special quests, form alliances, conquer lands and tax them, set spawn levels, and fight in epic wars filled with sieges and battles that will test your strategic and tactical abilities. You can also obtain a pet dragon, but only with a clan and a castle can your pet evolve into its

flying and fire-breathing wyvern form.

Using a modified version of the *Unreal* engine, *Lineage II* has great graphics to go with its gameplay. What's more, you'll get a lot of bang for your buck, since the developer promises to provide two major downloadable upgrades a year instead of leeching you with endless expansion packs. **B**

**GMA SAYS** → 'If *Lineage II* is as addictive as *FFXI*, the GMA staff is in trouble.'

→ HOW HOT... |





RELEASE | JUNE

# PUYO POP FEVER

## THE ONLY PRESCRIPTION IS MORE PUYO

□ SYSTEM GC/GB □ PUBLISHER SEGA □ DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM

It always comes back to things falling into pits. Puzzle concepts come and go—*Picross*, *Devil Dice*, *Intelligent Qube*—but things falling into pits remain. Compile dropped its first *Puyo* down a pit in 1992, and even now, the puyos are still falling.

Like any good puzzler, *Puyo* is simple on the surface. Pairs of multicolored "puyo" blobs drift down a pit and stack up in sequence. Four identical blobs go pop when linked together, and the rest of the stack settles into the space they leave behind. Building the stack to burst in a chain of explosions delivers a bonus in the form of obstacles thrown down the other player's pit.

Fever discards the special attacks from Dreamcast's *Puyo Puyo 4*. Instead, it features the fever meter,

which mixes offense and defense to quickly shift the balance of matches. An opponent's chains curse you with garbage blobs as usual, but if you cancel that garbage with chains of your own, the fever meter fills. Maximizing it kicks off a tableau of premade chains to burst at will and send a mass of garbage the other way, but a skilled opponent can naturally feed their fever meter at the same time. The result is a pure contest of chaining ability with no unbalanced, random elements.

Oddly, it's only for Xbox and Cube in the States (although it's out for PS2 in Japan), so PS2 gamers get no *Puyo* this summer. ☹

**GMA SAYS** → Hardcore puzzle fans have always loved *Puyo*, and this is a long-deserved chance for the series to get some exposure.

→ HOW HOT...



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## ATHENS 2004

CARRY THE TORCH

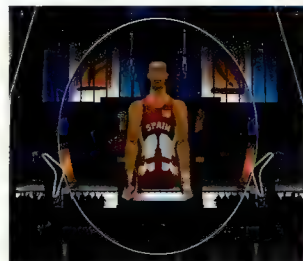
SYSTEM PS2 PUBLISHER SCEA DEVELOPER EUROCOM



PS2



→ Game editors, by default, do not run. We sit. We sit and use our thumbs in amazingly dexterous ways. Running involves getting up, which is another strenuously forbidden activity. The only time we get to "stand" is when we do the 10-meter sprint to the vending machine, followed by the spare-change lift. Except for Milky. In real life, he was a competitive swimmer. 100-meter breast stroke and the 200 IM, reпреzent!



Nothing brings the world closer together quite like the Olympic games, but if you can't make the trip to Greece to view the greatest spectacle in sports, then *Athens 2004* may be your best alternative. The only game that's officially licensed by the International Olympic Committee, *Athens 2004* features several venues, all of which have been re-created using actual blueprints and photographs for that little bit of extra detail. Witness the Markopoulo Olympic Equestrian Center, Panathinaiko Stadium for

Archery, and other locations with really long Greek names in all their glory!

The attention to realism doesn't stop there. Each of the 25 events—spanning aquatic, athletic (track and field), gymnastic, archery, equestrian, shooting, and weightlifting competitions—look almost like the real thing, thanks to motion-capture technology. So whether it's swimming the 100m freestyle, vaulting, galloping on a horse, sprinting to the finish line, or cleaning and, uh, jerking, it's all very convincing.

If that's not enough to whet your Olympic appetite, 64 countries vie for gold medals in *Athens 2004*—of those 64 countries, there are about 800 participants. You can even create custom events if the standard rules bore you, but don't expect some weird bastardization of actual competitions, like equestrian skeet shooting or something similarly deranged. **K**

**GMA SAYS** → Sounds good and all, but can it outdo Konami's *Track & Field* games?

→ HOW HOT... |







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RELEASE | MAY

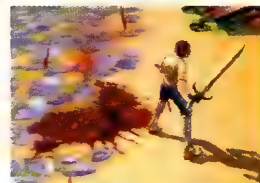
## SUDEKI

THAT'S SUE-DECKY. NOT SUHDUCKY

□ SYSTEM XB □ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT □ DEVELOPER CLIMAX ENTERTAINMENT



→ There are few problems in *Sudeki* that can't be handled with a bit of whacking and thrusting. You will run into a lot of sword fights, so your skills are unlikely to fade.



**If you're a perceptive Xbox owner, you likely know a lot about this heavily delayed game already—its Japanese-influenced visuals, its action-RPG gameplay, its minutely detailed environments.**

In other words, you know the features list, but you don't know how the game actually works. As it turns out, the world of *Sudeki*—divided into mirror-image light and dark lands, similar to those in *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*—is more orthodox in structure than you'd expect. You've got

vast expanses of wilderness packed with monsters you can kill for experience (and for their pelts, which you sell to wandering traders). You've got towns dotted about where you hunt down information and learn about side quests (which *Sudeki* has lots of, incidentally). Finally, you have dungeons where your party (up to four members) hunts for treasure, solves *Zelda*-like puzzles, and defeats *Phantasy Star Online*-like bosses.

You control one party member at a time in battles, switching among

members of your crew with the White and Black buttons. A and X are your Melee-Attack buttons, and pressing them in certain patterns lets you break out special combo moves. Skills (*Sudeki*'s catchall term for magic) let you attack one or multiple enemies via a special Range meter, and summons offer the same ability with much more flash and force. The newest innovation: Characters with ranged weapons (such as Ailish and her magic rod) now view battles from a first-person perspective, while sword

users still use the standard third-person view.

Although *Sudeki* is an RPG at heart, the only stats you have are health, skill, power, and essence (magical strength), and a *KOTOR*-style quest log keeps track of your current goals. It's this odd brew of Eastern and Western RPG principles that makes *Sudeki* unique. **B+**

**GMA SAYS** → It's Xbox's best RPG prospect this year. Oh, except for *Fable*.

→ HOW HOT...



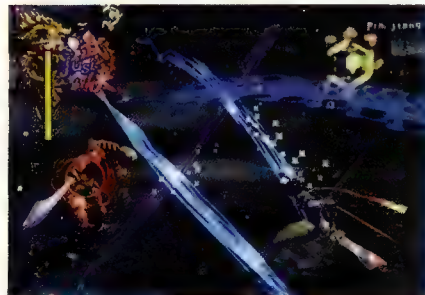


RELEASE | MAY

# BUJINGAI

KUNG FU CHAOS

□ SYSTEM PS2 □ PUBLISHER BAM □ DEVELOPER TAITO/RED ENTERTAINMENT



→ J-pop superstar Gackt, found here in his more traditional getup, which is an unlockable costume.



Hong Kong-style martial arts movies are a popular inspiration for games, and it's easy to see why: The visually stylish, high-intensity action that most of them deliver are what every good action game aims for, so it's natural to take cues right from the source. Strangely, though, the more blatant the swiping from the Hong Kong style, the worse the game usually turns out. Trust us when we say that *Bujingai* is the long-awaited exception to this rule, with gameplay as good as it is fast and colorful.

On the surface, *Bujingai* is a slash-em-up like many others, following in the *Devil May Cry* mold. It's only when you take the countering system into account that the hidden depths start to emerge. While blocking, you have a number of petals that prevent you from taking damage, but you lose a petal every time you're hit. However, until you run out, you can counterattack any hit in an enemy's combo if your timing's spot on.

And it doesn't stop there: Your counterattack sets in motion your own

combo, which the enemy can potentially block if he has enough petals. When up against master swordsmen, this parry/reverse combo system can produce results as fast, furious, and breathtaking as any you'd see on the big screen.

That's due in large part to the graphics engine, which has to be seen to be believed. How the developers got this many lighting effects, explosions, energy trails, and fluidly moving characters all to run at 60 frames per second is amazing. The characters

(such as hero Lau, whose look is based on weirdo J-pop idol Gackt) are by Toshihiro Kawamoto, famous for designing *Cowboy Bebop's* cast.

When you round out the package with wirework-inspired wall-running and airborne sword duels, it's the closest anyone's ever come to the ridiculous grandeur of a good Hong Kong flick. **B+**

**GMA SAYS** → Don't let the mystical J-pop schtick turn you off. *Bujingai* rocks.

→ HOW HOT...

4.5



RELEASE | MAY

# MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG

## MONKEY BUSINESS 101

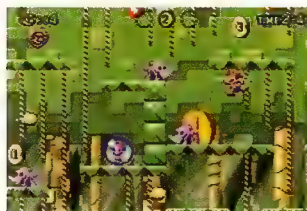
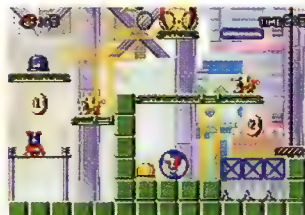
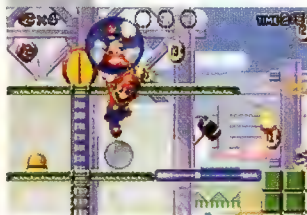
□SYSTEM: GBA □PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

Ten years ago, Nintendo released *Donkey Kong '94* for Game Boy—the new NST-developed *Mario vs. Donkey Kong* is based on pretty much the same concept: Mario working his way through puzzlike stages, jumping around, climbing things, throwing switches, and avoiding enemies, all the while searching for either keys that unlock doors (it's what keys do) or the numerous Mini-Mario toys that DK stole yet inexplicably left lying about for Mario to easily recover. Stupid monkey. The puzzle aspect is based primarily on finding keys, activating switches that allow access to doors, and

avoiding obstacles and enemies. Of course, famous Mario icons make the requisite cameos—the cowardly Boos cause trouble in the later levels.

*Mario vs. Donkey Kong* has six worlds, each divided into eight segments: six base levels (3-1, 3-2, etc.), one level in which Mario has to lead the lemminglike Mini-Marios to the boss stage, and then the boss fight itself. That's 48 flavors of old-school Mario goodness...let's get it on. **IK**

**GMA SAYS** → This is the game we've been waiting for all our lives. Or at least while Rare murdered the franchise in the '90s.

→ HOW HOT... 

RELEASE | JUNE

# MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR

## MOVE OVER, TIGER. IT'S-A MARIO

□SYSTEM: GBA □PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □DEVELOPER: CAMELOT

Forget the ho-hum banality of typical golf games. *Mario Golf*, as fans of its incarnation as an N64 game will recall, not only twists up the sport with trademark Nintendo cuteness, but also utilizes amusing features not found in other games. Yeah, you're still trying to hit that tiny white ball into a little hole, but *MGAT* adds some RPG elements to the mix.

You'll build up skills and gain experience as you play, earning tickets that allow you to buy clubs, which in turn give you an edge on things such as accuracy and spin. The five courses become harder as you progress, incorporating rain or high-wind conditions that make putting more challenging. To complicate matters, you need to build up your partner's skills at the same rate as your own in order to compete effectively in tournaments. Hitting the ball just right requires precision and judgment—it's definitely not cakewalk.

Each course has its own practice

facilities, and the first four have skill challenges in which you can earn experience points, minigames, and tournaments. Once you get through the first four courses, you progress to the infamous Mushroom Kingdom.

If you just want to play a quick game of golf, you can do that, too. But playing through the story mode unlocks characters you can use in quick-play mode.

Not surprisingly, you can link up to play head-to-head; you can also hook up with *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour* on GameCube to transfer characters between the two games and unlock stuff in the GBA game. You can even trade clubs with other players.

In short, *MGAT* looks robust enough to keep players on the green for a long time—without a lot of boredom. **IK**

**GMA SAYS** → When we can't get out for our tee times (stupid jobs), we'll fire this bad boy up for a few quick ones on the green.

→ HOW HOT... 

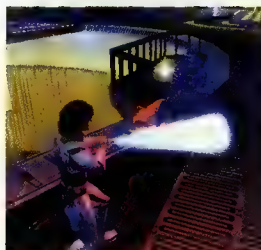


RELEASE | FEBRUARY '05

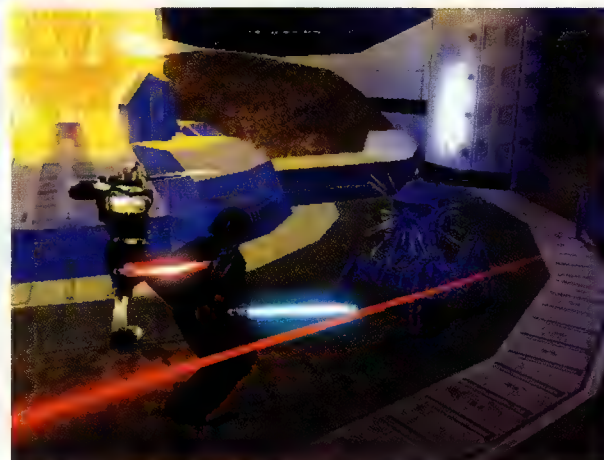
# KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC: THE SITH LORDS

THE FORCE IS BACK, AND THERE'S GONNA BE TROUBLE—HEY NA HEY NAAA

OS/SYSTEM PC/XB PUBLISHER LUCASARTS DEVELOPER OBISSIAN ENTERTAINMENT



→ Interestingly, BioWare has handed off development of *The Sith Lords* to fellow RPG cohort Obsidian Entertainment while overseeing the project. Do we expect *The Sith Lords* to kick just as much butt? Yes.



The first *Knights of the Old Republic* proved that *Star Wars* still had it. The unprecedented (and unproven) teaming-up of BioWare and LucasArts produced a game that—despite countless development delays and so-so graphics—restored gamers' previously shattered faith in the fabled franchise. For the sequel, the development baton has been passed to newcomer Obsidian Entertainment; should *Star Wars* fans be readying their Force Destroy powers? Not just yet.

Obsidian has its own history of

fantastic RPGs—the principal team members come from Black Isle Studios, which made games in the *Baldur's Gate*, *Icewind Dale*, and *Fallout* series. *The Sith Lords* looks to be in capable hands.

The game picks up just five years after Darth Malak decimated the Republic in the first game—and now you've got to clean up that mess. But this one isn't a direct sequel, since the first game had multiple endings and so many different story possibilities.

You play as a new character, a Jedi who was in exile throughout the civil war,

so while you won't necessarily have to go through your Jedi training all over again, you've lost touch with the Force. Your Jedi powers, therefore, are a little rusty—and you lost your lightsaber (figures). The Jedi order itself, you'll find, has been completely disbanded, and you're left to pick up the pieces.

*The Sith Lords* won't introduce any radical gameplay changes. You have just as much control over the light- or dark-side direction of the story as in the first game. Combat has a streamlined interface but otherwise works the same.

You even pilot the *Ebon Hawk* (your ship from the first game) and lead a party of three, though you'll meet a new cast of characters. Some of your old friends make cameo appearances, including a droid who bears a striking resemblance to everyone's favorite meatbag-hatin' HK-47. It's evolution, not revolution, which should work out just fine. Can lightning truly strike twice? ☐

**GMR SAYS** → The sequel to 2003's Most Radical Game of the Year? We believe in this one.

→ HOW HOT... | 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥

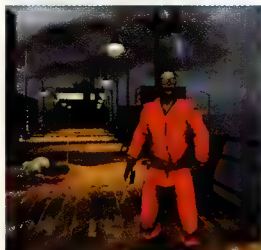
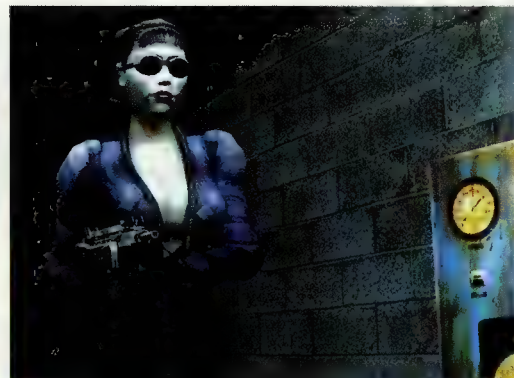


RELEASE | NOVEMBER

# VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE—BLOODLINES

BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR

□SYSTEM PC □PUBLISHER ACTIVISION □DEVELOPER TROIKA GAMES



→ Some of *Vampire's* mechanics remind us of *KOTOR*, specifically the vaguely moral choices you make that alter the game experience. Will the sequel uphold the original's high standards? Let's hope so.



If you're yearning for an RPG with a little less fey elfishness and a little more Goth attitude, then take a gander at *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines*. The last time we saw a decent vampire RPG was back in 2000 with *Vampire: The Masquerade—Redemption*. While Nihilistic (developer of *Redemption*) is busy doing *StarCraft: Ghost*, Activision went to Troika, which boasts a staff of RPG veterans with such little titles as *Fallout* and *Arcanum* on their résumés.

You start out as a fledgling newbie

vampire enrolled in one of the seven vampire clans from the original RPG. Clans include the brutal brujah, the ugly nosferatu, the magic-proficient tremere, and the charming Toreador. As expected, each clan has distinct special abilities and spells, such as Celerity for extra speed or Blood Boil for extra enemy discomfort.

All this Gothiness is rendered with the Source engine, the same engine powering *Half-Life 2*. Even though most of the game is in first person, don't expect a shooter filled with fangs and

dripping blood. *Bloodlines* is an RPG first and foremost. Your character's skills and attributes define how well he does in combat, not your actual skill. And if you've ever played *Fallout* or *Arcanum*, you know that Troika loves giving players multiple choices for quests. That design philosophy is present here, as your vampire alter ego can use either harsh weapons or harsher language to get what he needs. An interesting side effect to using diplomacy is that there are no die rolls or random chances—if you can

choose a diplomatic option (whether to use charm or outright mind control)—then that option will succeed. Of course, if you're not a charming vampire, that option won't be offered.

*Bloodlines* won't ship until sometime after *Half-Life 2* comes out, but that just gives Troika more time to refine the game before waking it up from its vampiric slumber. **C**

**GMA SAYS** → Vampires, RPGs, and first-person mayhem. We hope it all melds successfully rather than becoming a disjointed, bloody mess.

→ HOW HOT...





RELEASE | FALL

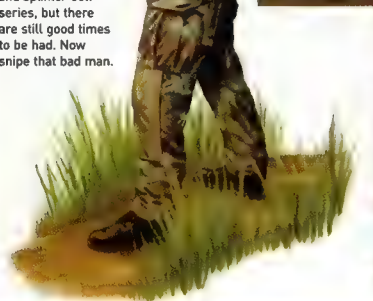
# GHOST RECON 2

A SINGLE BULLET CAN STILL KILL YOU

□SYSTEM GC/PC/PS2/XB □PUBLISHER UBISOFT □DEVELOPER RED STORM



→ The Ghost Recon series may have lost some of the spotlight because of the *Rainbow Six* and *Splinter Cell* series, but there are still good times to be had. Now snipe that bad man.



**A Ghost's work is never done.**  
After quelling conflicts in former hot spots of the Soviet Union, East Africa, and Cuba, Tom Clancy's elite troops are headed to Asia in *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2* (working title). A rogue North Korean general has invaded and seized control of China (we can only guess Kim Jong-Il was too busy kidnapping people to notice), and the task of unofficially slipping in and restoring order once again falls on the Ghosts.

More than just another expansion,

*GR2* promises to completely overhaul the tactical-shooter series. With the stated goal of illustrating "the utter chaos of war," developer Red Storm is outfitting its shiny new sequel with the Havoc 2 physics engine (previously seen in *Max Payne 2* and *Deus Ex: Invisible War*), new soldier types, destructible environments, and vehicle combat. The focus has shifted from small, covert actions to full-scale war, and the Ghosts can now call in reinforcements or an air strike if things get too hot on the ground.

*GR2*'s single-player campaign (no word yet on multiplayer possibilities) aims to give players a more immersive, emotional experience than in previous *Ghost Recon* titles. To this end, *GR2* features much more graphical detail and better A.I. than its predecessors. The developers also took a cue from *Rainbow Six 3* and are introducing an as-yet-unnamed central character to lead the Ghosts into battle.

If all the running around and blowing stuff up sounds like too much of a departure, take heart: While

there's a greater emphasis on big, action-packed battles, *GR2* is staying true to its tactical roots and sharpening its focus on realism. You still get to order around squads of Ghosts, this time with a quicker interface, and they are smarter than before. And don't worry, a single bullet can still kill you—there're just a lot more of them coming your way. ■

**GMA SAYS** → We want these ghosts in our machines.

→ HOW HOT... | 🔥🔥🔥

XB

PC

PS2

GC



RELEASE | JUNE

## SHELLSHOCK

THE NAM

□ SYSTEM PC/PS2/XB □ PUBLISHER EIDOS □ DEVELOPER GUERRILLA GAMES



→ The gritty milieu of the Vietnam era makes its way into yet another videogame (*Battlefield Vietnam* being the other). Will the gaming world take heed?

With *ShellShock*, Guerrilla Games' aim is to detail the experience of a single soldier during the Vietnam conflict—which means no multiplayer. You start off the 12-mission campaign as a strapping new recruit who gets sent on "normal missions." Your objectives include securing areas, completing search-and-destroy missions, and providing backup. At the point when you become tired of being just another grunt, you're put in Special Forces training and are then placed in more

interesting covert missions that involve sabotage and assassination.

In between these missions, you can make pit stops at your base. Not only do you get the requisite mission briefings and weapon re-arms there, but you can also purchase a variety of goods and services, ranging from cigarettes and tattoos to, well, some "long-time loving" that will most likely cost a mere \$5.

SOCOM vets will be familiar with the controls, but not with the enemy. You're up against the numerous and

sneaky Vietcong (with a few NVA soldiers as well). Not only will they assault you from all sorts of crazy angles from the jungle, they'll also set up devious booby traps—so while most of your missions put you in a squad filled with A.I. buddies, don't be surprised if one of them walks by a tree and gets a face full of bamboo spikes. Getting past these traps triggers a puzzle minigame. And much like in *Killzone*, you can't directly control your squadmates here, but they'll provide good cover

fire and complementary support.

As with anything dealing with the Vietnam conflict, there's going to be graphic and controversial content. Your A.I. buddies might start shooting civilians. You might see those same buddies getting tortured. Guerrilla isn't pulling any punches here, and we'll see how well the company balances shock and gameplay next month. **IC**

**GMA SAYS** → A pretty good package that makes you feel like you're "in the s-t." We hope the A.I. gets tuned up a bit.

→ HOW HOT...





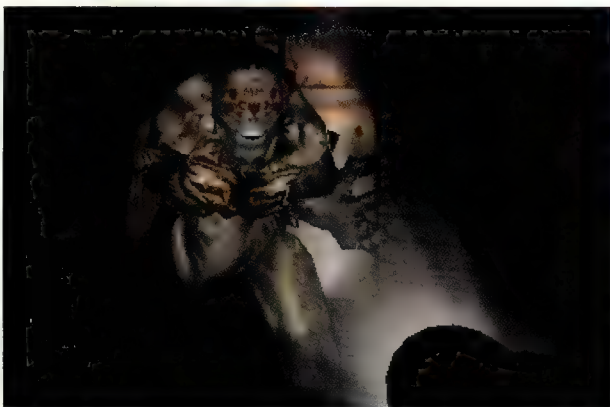
# DOOM 3

THREE YEARS AND COUNTING...

When Id first announced *Doom 3*, we didn't realize that it meant we'd have to wait at least three years before we played the game. To celebrate, we've assembled a whopping three new shots to hold you over until Id sees fit to unleash its magnum opus. Does it still look hot? Yeah. Does it make us want to perforate hellish bad boys until our egg-timer rings? Hell yeah! When's it out? Dunno.



→ With no new information of significance regarding *Doom 3* at our disposal, we've crafted this little ditty instead: "Oh, fancy gates of hell, we know you're rather swell, but where oh where are the splendid guns 'pon which our minds do dwell? All we've seen thus far are crispy screens of figures in the lone, lacking cacophony, lacking tone. Give us a HUD, hurry up quick! Let the ordnance fly, make it stick." Peace.



GALLERY

XB

PC



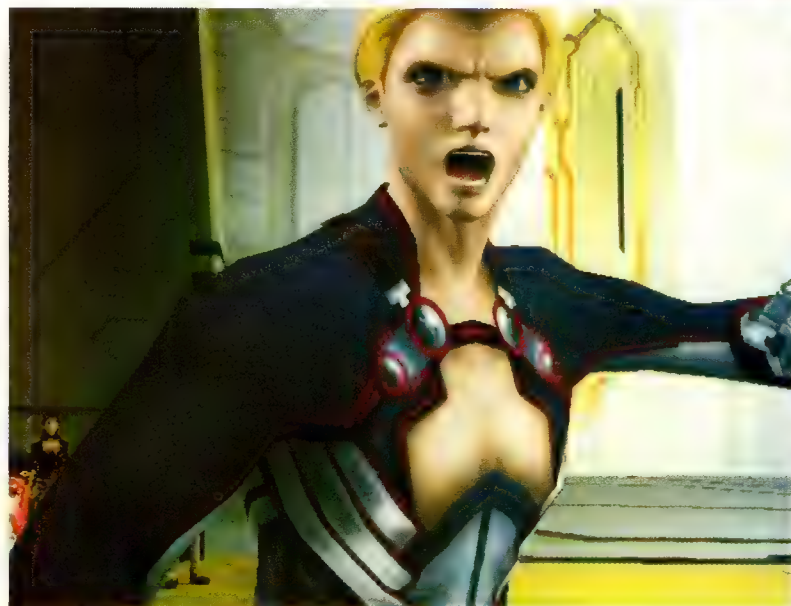
## XENOSAGA EPISODE II

## SAMURAI IN SPACE

The first episode of *Xenosaga* didn't have the most conclusive ending, so fans are no doubt looking forward to the imminent arrival of *Episode II*, hitting Japan on June 24. Americans will have to wait a little longer to find out the whole story, which focuses on the past and future of Jr. this time, but the pain won't be as acute as it was with *Episode I*'s interminable localization. *Episode II*'s coming Stateside in early 2005.



→ The samurai traditionalist is Shion's kid brother, Jin, who we met during a brief conversation in *Episode I*. Hopefully, he'll bring with him a little more light to shed on the mystery of what happened to Shion's family....



→ The *Episode II* trailer concludes with a beautiful duel between Jin and Margulis, the leader of the shadowy U-TIC organization who kicked your ass in *Episode I*. If this scene looks familiar, it should—an early version of the same battle, with Jin dressed in his samurai outfit, showed up in a few trailers for *Episode I*, but that sequence eventually wound up on the cutting-room floor.





# INCOMING GAMES

kenosaga episode II

» NEXT GALLERY



→ Some things change in *Episode II*, and some things stay the same. The male character designs are still familiar—Albedo still has that beautifully insane fixed stare—but the ladies have grown up a little. KOS-MOS, M.O.M.O., and Shion have shed a little of their animation-inspired style, giving them a slightly more human appearance. And Shion's given up her glasses for some reason, but that seems like a fair trade for the sweet new M.O.M.O. design.



PS2



# IT'S SHO

## THE 8 BIGGEST MOVIE-



Wow!  
There sure are a lot  
of movie games! How do  
you think they'll turn  
out?

What  
do I know?  
The last movie I  
saw in the theater  
was *Sweet  
Sweetback's Baad  
Asssss Song*.





# W TIME!

## BASED GAMES OF 2004

**NOW SHOWING:**

**THE INCREDIBLES    THE PUNISHER**  
**VAN HELSING    HARRY POTTER**  
**SHREK 2    SPIDER-MAN 2**  
**THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK**  
**CATWOMAN**



TIME WAS, THE *GMR* CREW WOULD DUCK FOR COVER WHEN WE SAW A GAME "BASED ON THE MOVIE." BUT *THE HULK* AND EA'S

TWO *LORD OF THE RINGS*, ALONG WITH CLASSICS LIKE *GOLDENEYE* AND *SPIDER-MAN*, ARE PROOF THAT THINGS AREN'T ALL BAD. AS HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL, *GMR* INVITES YOU TO GRAB SOME POPCORN, TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES, AND JOIN US, ALONG WITH THE THUMBDANGO PUPPETS, IN OUR SURVEY OF THE MOVIE GAMES COMING THIS YEAR.



# THE INCREDIBLES

SYSTEM: PS2/XB/GC/PC/GBA

PUBLISHER: THQ

DEVELOPER: Heavy Iron Studios

STAR POWER: Hopefully all voice talent from the film (not set at press time):

CRAIG T. NELSON: Bob Parr/Mr. Incredible

HOLLY HUNTER: Helen Parr/Elastigirl

SAMUEL L. JACKSON: Lucius Best/Frozone

JASON LEE: Syndrome/Incredibles' son

SARAH VOWELL: Violet Parr

MOVIE RELEASE: November 5, 2004

GAME RELEASE: October 18, 2004

➔ Here's the scene: You find yourself suddenly in the middle of an inferno at a high-class hotel, with flames everywhere and debris falling all around you. Your goal is to get to another part of the building, and you must accomplish this by smashing fallen timbers that block your path, leaping across small chasms, and saving innocent victims along the way—all the while breaking the heads of evil mechanical beings bent on your destruction.

And why do you do this? Because you're a hero. A superhero.

You're Mr. Incredible.

*The Incredibles* is Pixar's sixth feature-length film, and it may prove to be its most ambitious yet. Written and directed by Brad Bird (the wonderful *Iron Giant*), *The Incredibles* tells the story of Bob Parr, aka Mr. Incredible, who, along with other hero types, once saved the world from countless supervillains during a bygone golden age of superheroes. But after a bad streak of accidents and the lawsuits that followed, Mr. Incredible hung up his spandex for good and retired into a quiet, remarkably unincalculable life as plain ol' Bob Parr, insurance claims adjuster, husband, and father. Several years and pounds later, Bob receives a mysterious summons that compels him, and ultimately his family, back into the superhero business. Mr. Incredible's superstrength is complemented by his *familias* Incredible: Mrs. Incredible, aka Elastigirl, has superstretching ability; daughter Violet can turn invisible and cast force fields; and the Incredibles' son has superspeed.

On its release this November, *The Incredibles* will stand alongside its Pixar-created brethren—*Toy Story*; *Toy Story 2*; *A Bug's Life*; *Monsters, Inc.*; and *Finding Nemo*—among the most award-winning and highest-grossing animated films of all time (more than \$2.5 billion total; *Finding Nemo* alone

grossed an estimated \$850 million worldwide). To say *The Incredibles* has some tough acts to follow would be a bit of an understatement.

Heavy Iron Studios, the Southern California-based division of THQ best known for last year's surprise hit *SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom*, faces a similarly daunting task as it creates the game based on *The Incredibles*: It's attempting to turn a 90-minute film into a many-hour interactive experience that matches the quality and experience of the film. The path Heavy Iron is taking is as much a study in game development as it is a casebook example of the similarities and differences between making games and making movies.

Lyle Hall, Heavy Iron's general manager and the executive producer for *The Incredibles* game, bristles at the stereotype that games based on movies are inevitably bad. "Making a great game is always our first goal," he says. "We're our harshest critics."

Heavy Iron's *The Incredibles* is shaping up to be the kind of game you might expect, and Hall wouldn't have it any other way. "We wanted to capture the most exciting moments in the movie from an action standpoint." Citing role models such as *Ratchet & Clank 2*, Heavy Iron is creating an action game that spans over 20 levels and lets players take on the role of each main character in levels designed specifically for their respective abilities. One level features the Incredibles' son dashing through a jungle while pursued by flying baddies in a play style reminiscent of racing sims. In another level, Elastigirl takes out villains with her stretching powers



➔ Top: Mr. Incredible uses his superstrength to take down the evil robot minions. Bottom: Another enemy defeated! Right: Because of the big screen, Pixar's models are heavy in detail, averaging about 4 million pixels. In contrast, the game's models average around 4,000.

along with her in a level that plays a little like *Marble Madness*.

For this preview, we played parts of three levels. The first featured Mr. Incredible running through the burning building mentioned in the beginning of this story. Along the way, we encountered a number of robotic bad guys. With a couple of jabs, they were dispatched quickly enough. As we progressed through the level, the tight control set and overall feeling of fun grabbed our attention. Our next Mr. Incredible fling came in a jungle environment. Here we took on more robots, this time of a blade-wielding variety. The trick here was to jump on top of the robot and execute a flying smash-down combo, one of Mr. I's several combos. Done precisely, the result is ground robot.

and gets around by swinging on her stretched arms (à la Spider-Man). In still another level, daughter Violet rolls around inside her Incrediball, an invisible sphere created by her force-field abilities. Her brother tags





→ The *Incredibles* game environments and character powers mirror those of the film, down to the detail of Mr. Incredible's several stages: from out-of-shape has-been here (depicted in these early game shots) to svelte, ready-for-action superegg.



I'm not sure about the whole man-in-tights thing. It just seems kind of weird.

That's not what you said last night.

The third level we played starred the *Incredibles'* superfast son [whose actual name Pixar asked us not to divulge]. It also started in a jungle setting where the kid takes off at speeds simulating up to 60 mph as flying minions are in hot pursuit. Running through a tunnel, he can corkscrew completely around the walls. With a turbo boost at certain strategic points, the whole level evokes the feel of a racing game. "We could build an entire game around [this kid]," Hall says.

Other levels we saw had Mr. Incredible battling dozens of henchmen at once, featuring some of

the special things Mr. Incredible can do. Of particular note is his ability to carry to two baddies over his shoulder and throw them. We also saw Mrs. Incredible and daughter Violet in action. And in a scene that you won't see in the movie, the *Incredibles'* son must dodge cars and other obstacles in a mad race to get to school on time.

Shifting north to the San Francisco Bay Area, Pixar tells us that while *The Incredibles* film may be its No. 1 priority, the game runs a very close second.

"Our responsibility is to make sure the game is true enough to the movie that when people come out of the theater, they can continue playing the movie indefinitely and enjoy the experience of watching the movie and finding new things in the game," says Mike Venturini, animator on *The Incredibles* at Pixar.

Extending and adding to the movie experience is particularly important to Pixar. "That's what's great about the game," adds Mark Andrews, head of story for *The Incredibles*. "[Heavy Iron] asked if they could include more bad guys, and I said absolutely and gave them a bunch of power armor and villains that were conceptualized but never made it into the movie."

Venturini and Andrews are the main folks at Pixar whose job it is to ensure that Heavy Iron's game represents *The Incredibles* film correctly. They realize the game is not an exact portrayal of the movie, nor was it ever meant to be. For them, consistency with *The Incredibles* universe has been a key focus. "As long as [the game] is done in the feel of the movie, and as long as the characters aren't diverting from the [movie] characters, it's fine," Andrews says. "Of course, you have to make concessions because it's two different styles of entertainment."

Two styles of entertainment for sure. The film is a continuous narrative, with several thousand lines of dialogue and around a 90-minute running time. The game is all action, with the player guiding the characters as they jump, block, run, and fight. And though the game won't be an exact duplication of the film, the story line is still maintained. For instance, in the film we see Mr. Incredible transition through several stages of his superhero-ness. When he first attempts to return to crime fighting, he wears cat-burglar clothes. Then we see flashbacks of Mr.

Incredible's glory days, when he was young and svelte and favored a blue uniform. Later we see the different stages of his familiar red uniform, first when he's overweight and slow, and later when he's toned up a bit. This is all properly reflected in the game.

Director Brad Bird's role involves more than approvals. He's been a part of several meetings to see the game and to discuss its direction. According to Venturini, Bird wants to be sure that no matter what Heavy Iron does, the game stays true to his vision for the

XB

PC

PS2

GBA

GC



film. "Brad is concerned with the overall look of the game. He draws the line," Venturini says. "But he really trusts that Heavy Iron knows how to make videogames."

Some of Pixar's moviemaking processes have affected Heavy Iron's process. The most intriguing of these crossovers is what is known as color scripting. A color script is a sort of emotional guide for an animation (or game) that maps out the tone and feel of the work. A color scripter takes the written scripts and breaks them down into sections that might evoke certain overarching emotions and ascribes specific colors to them. For instance, in *The Incredibles* movie, there's an entire scene progression in which we see Mr. Incredible as Bob Parr, insurance claims adjuster. He's depressed and bored in his cubicle. The color scripter drew this section in dark blues and grays. A later climactic fight scene might call for the intensity of reds and yellows. The color script is then handed to the animators to guide them as they draw their scenes; this applies to the game as well.

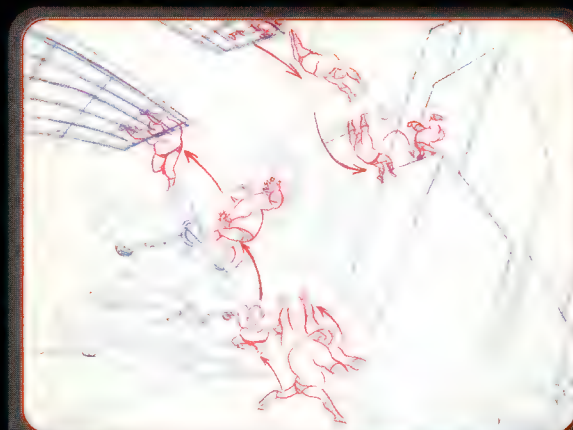
Ask both Hall and Andrews, and they'll tell you the difference between moviemaking and game development is one of degrees. True, each has a director, producer, scriptwriters, storyboard artists, special effects people, sound engineers, and soundtrack composers. And in the case of Pixar and Heavy Iron, both companies work almost entirely in digital mediums and both have programmers.

But for every similarity, there are differences. Movies are, on average, 90-minute experiences; games are many-hour experiences. Movies are a passive experience for their audience; games are interactive. Movies tell a narrative story in which dialogue is important; games rely far more strictly on action.

One difference that isn't so obvious is the visual perspective of the main characters. "In gameplay, the camera is always behind the character," says Venturini. "[In film] we rely on seeing the character's face to convey emotion."

Jokes Andrews, "Yeah, we had to totally redesign Bob's [Mr. Incredible's] booty [for the game]."


Other differences are more obvious. While neither company would divulge numbers, it's likely that the game is costing in the neighborhood of \$3 million to \$5 million to produce,



→ Before designing the actual levels in *The Incredibles* game, Heavy Iron sketches out concepts that explore how the hero might move through the level. Shiraz Akmal, HI's director of development, calls this the "Family Circus" approach to level design.

whereas the movie will cost over \$100 million (based on *Nemo*'s \$90-million price tag). Heavy Iron has about 30 people working on the game, compared to over 700 people working on the film. The film is being created for huge theater screens, so the character models are especially detailed, to the tune of 4 million polygons. Compare this to the game, playing on a far smaller screen where character models are more likely to average 4,000 polygons.

Due in some part to the fact that both movie and game are being created digitally, some interesting scheduling challenges have arisen. The film is still far from finished. With the game actually set for release a full two weeks before the film, the development tracks are now parallel. Essentially, both movie and game are works in progress.

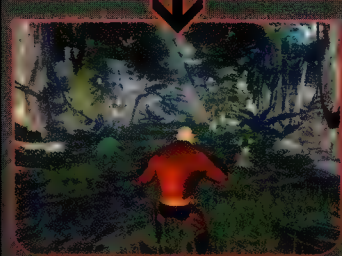
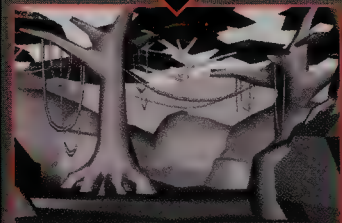
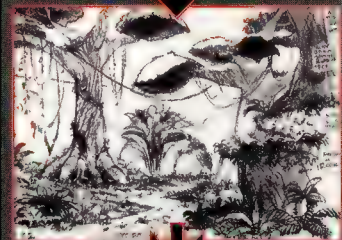
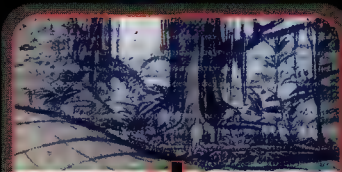
Come October and November, though, both Heavy Iron and Pixar will echo Mr. Incredible's signature line: "It's showtime!" 



→ Above: The super-heroes of Heavy Iron. L to R: Kirk Tonne, lead designer; Alex Carbonero, lead artist; Shiraz Akmal, dir. of dev.; Lyle Hall, gen. mgr./exec. producer.



→ Pixar's Mark Andrews, head of story; and Mike Venturini, animator, ensure that the game stays true to director Brad Bird's vision for *The Incredibles* film.



→ From Pixar to pixelated: This sample level progression shows the original concept Pixar supplied to Heavy Iron, HI's interpretation, then the base 3D model (in the Maya art program), and in the final form as the highly detailed jungle level.



→ Pixar and Heavy Iron work with color scripts to help the artists nail the emotional tone of a scene or level. Here we see the dominant greens of a jungle.



# THE PUNISHER

SYSTEMS: PS2/XB  
PUBLISHER: THQ  
DEVELOPER: Volition  
STAR POWER: Punisher comic book writer

Garth Ennis scripting  
GAME RELEASE: Fall 2004  
MOVIE RELEASE: April 16 (out now)



→ The Punisher game is based on The Punisher movie, which is based on the popular Marvel Comics series by Garth Ennis. Above: Frank Castle as Punisher offers nose reduction advice to a ne'er-do-well. Left: Frank goes to shake hands and misses. Below: The Punisher punishes the restaurant for bad food. The movie will have been in theaters by the time you read this. You did see it, didn't you?



→ Don't dismiss The Punisher as a Max Payne clone with a skull on his shirt (then again, we often considered Max Payne a Punisher clone sans skull). Sure, both games are third person with lots of gunplay, but there's enough here to remind everyone that Punisher has actually been around a lot longer.

For those of you who might not have read the Marvel comics, the basic premise is this: Frank Castle loses his family to a mob hit and decides to kill crime. In the comics, he was a Vietnam veteran, and in the flick, he's an undercover Fed and Gulf War vet. The game is going to be "authentic," since Garth Ennis, the current writer of the comics (who basically reignited the comic series) is also scripting the story.

Two elements stand out: interrogation and slaughter modes. Slaughter mode is an honest-to-god unique version of bullet time, as filtered through Frank Castle's eyes. In slaughter mode, not only does the world turn reddish and time slows down, but Frank has unlimited ammo, and he starts having flashbacks. So while you're gunning down goons with reckless abandon, you'll also start hearing Frank's wife and kids, as they provide aural reminders of why he's shooting up criminals in the first place.

The cooler feature is the interrogation mode, which lets Frank use the environment to extract information. Sometimes, he'll open and close a shutter on someone's neck. Or he'll dunk someone into a deep fryer. Or he'll just bash heads against walls or point a gun in someone's face. When you enter interrogation mode, your analog stick controls the degree of interrogation, so you directly affect just how hard

you slam a goon's head onto the floor, or just how deep into the fryer his head goes. When you're done watching Thomas Jane deal out punishment in The Punisher movie, the game's the easiest way for you to punish criminals yourself. ←

Movies are so violent and bloody these days!

Yeah, but you can't really avenge the death of your family with harsh language.





## VAN HELSING

SYSTEMS: PS2/XB

PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal Games

DEVELOPER: Saffire

STAR POWER:

HUGH JACKMAN: Van Helsing

SHULER HENSLEY: Frankenstein's monster

GAME RELEASE: Spring 2004

MOVIE RELEASE: May 7

➔ Coming soon to a small screen near you is Vivendi Universal's action-adventure *Van Helsing*, based on the upcoming gothic action flick starring Hugh Jackman and Kate Beckinsale. Like the movie, *Van Helsing* follows the adventures of Gabriel Van Helsing (voiced by Jackman himself), a rough-and-tumble monster hunter descended from the classic archnemesis of Count Dracula. As the game opens, Van Helsing is en route to gloomy Transylvania, charged with seeking out the last heir to a cursed family and putting an end to her tormentor—who just happens to be of Drac himself. Several other horror icons also pop up along the way, including Frankenstein's monster (voiced by actor Shuler Hensley), the wolfman, and a few others we won't spoil.

Our rugged hero traipses about the Transylvanian countryside in third person, dishing out holy judgment to undead zombies, skeletons, gargoyles, and other creatures of the night in a decidedly *Devil May Cry*-esque fashion. Van Helsing comes equipped with a pair of powerful six-shooters, a blade weapon that he can use to slice and dice his enemies up close, and a grappling hook that comes in handy for both combat and general mobility purposes. Other weapons are strewn about the game environment, including enhanced versions that are imbued with magical properties. Combat is quick and frantic, with a number of impressive combo attacks and finishing moves at your disposal.

Beyond having you beat countless undead abominations into their next life, *Van Helsing*'s gameplay also



➔ Both the *Van Helsing* film and game star Hugh Jackman (he of *Wolverine* fame) as the legendary monster-hunting descendant of Count Dracula. In Vivendi's action-adventure take, Van "The Man" battles wolfmen and a slough of classic monsters, including Frankenstein's one and only. The film hits May 7. We hope the movie's writers don't become one of Van Helsing's most wanted.

includes a few puzzles, which often facilitates a careful search of the area for helpful clues and items. These elements, combined with a seemingly solid game engine and a cool premise, might just make for an entertaining adventure to complement what is sure to be a fun summer film. ☛

It's nice to see someone finally doing something about all those wolfmen running around.

Yes, but when is somebody going to address this country's growing mummy problem?



## MOVIES TO GAMES

GAME	PRODUCTION COMPANY/STUDIO
Alone in the Dark (Atari)	Bolt KG/Brightlight Pictures
BloodRayne (Majesco)	Bolt KG/Brightlight Pictures
Resident Evil: Apocalypse (Capcom)	Sony's Screen Gems
Silent Hill (Konami)	Davis Films

## COULD HAPPEN

GAME	PRODUCTION COMPANY/STUDIO
American McGee's Oz	Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Disney
Dead or Alive (Tecmo)	Impact Pictures
Dogma (Activision)	Warner Bros.
Soul Calibur (Namco)	Sony's Anthem Pictures

Making game properties into movies is hardly new. *Mortal Kombat*, *Street Fighter*, *Super Mario Bros.*, and *Tomb Raider* are just a few

WILL  
LIKELY  
HAPPEN



## SHREK 2

SYSTEMS: GBA/GC/PC/PS2/XB

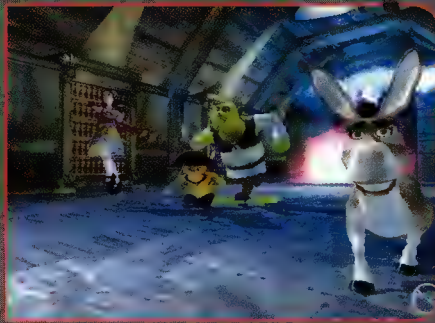
PUBLISHER: Activision

DEVELOPER: Luxoflux

STAR POWER: Voices of secondary movie characters, official sound-alikes of Mike Myers and Eddie Murphy

GAME RELEASE: May 3

MOVIE RELEASE: May 21



→ Historically, games based on Shrek haven't fared well (anyone remember *Shrek Super Party?* No?), but in the hands of Activision, things might change for the better. Even with an official sound-alike, Activision probably won't be able to do anything about Mike Myers' fired Scottish accent. Still, we're laying odds it'll be a fun game anyway.



Shrek reminds me of you, dear. Rough on the outside, a heart of gold on the inside!

You're funny. Like the donkey. And that's all I'll say.



Ever since Shrek made his videogame debut in a 2001 Xbox launch title, one thing has remained constant for any game with his name in the title (seven of them!): It probably stinks worse than the swamp he calls home. For *Shrek 2*, though, Luxoflux may have finally found the formula for a fun platformer starring the big green ogre.

*Shrek 2* sets itself apart with its unique four-player structure. Each level features a quartet of movie characters onscreen as they bust up enemies and use their special abilities to solve puzzles, besting the task at hand. And the cool part? You can switch between the four of them on the fly by yourself, or up to three friends can join you as each controls an individual character.

The game's first stage begins with its team of Shrek (a burly brawler), Fiona (now with kung-fu action grip), Donkey (an ass-kicking ass), and Gingerbread Man ("a true ninja hero," says the game) slaughtering snails so that Shrek can have some fresh eyeballs for the trip to Far Far Away. As with each individual sequence of various tasks to follow, this takes all of four minutes. Before you know it, you're handling an ambush by Robin Hood and his Merry (very merry) Men, trying to catch fairies for a leprechaun, and bopping live chickens into a boiling cauldron for a stew prepared by L'il Red (who, as with Puss-in-Boots and several more, eventually becomes playable). You'll even experience in each level a mode called "hero time," wherein one of the characters tries to succeed at something alone.

Essentially, *Shrek 2* offers a string of minigames cleverly strung together to look like something more. But more important, it stays true to the film not only in its story, but also with laugh-out-loud moments similar to those that made the first movie such a hit. **C**

examples. But lately it seems Hollywood is in a feeding frenzy to take polygons to the big screen. From the sure things to the absurd (a *Crazy Taxi* movie is just, well, crazy), we've put together a comprehensive list of the games going celluloid, who's taking them there, and how likely (and how soon) they're expected to hit theaters.

### STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED

GAME	PRODUCTION COMPANY/STUDIO
<i>Crazy Taxi</i> (Sega)	Mindfire Entertainment
<i>Fear Effect</i> (Eidos)	Boh! KG
<i>Metroid</i> (Nintendo)	Joha Woo
<i>State of Emergency</i> (Rockstar)	New Line Cinema

### TALKS ARE HAPPENING

GAME	PRODUCTION COMPANY/STUDIO
<i>Metal Gear Solid</i> (Konami)	Universal Studios
<i>Prince of Persia</i> (Ubisoft)	Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Disney



# HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

SYSTEMS: PS2/XB/GC/PC/GBA  
PUBLISHER: EA Games  
DEVELOPER: EA UK

STAR POWER: Character likenesses and actor sound-alikes

GAME RELEASE: June 4  
MOVIE RELEASE: June 4

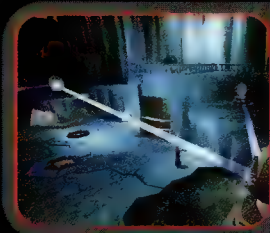
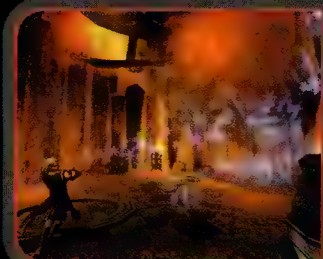


➔ The third *Harry Potter* book is often considered the best, due mostly to its darker tone and more mature story line. One of the prevalent elements in the third book is the dementor, a nasty creature that looks like a nazgul from *Lord of the Rings* but spends its time sucking souls out of people in prison. Much of the book surrounds Harry's overcoming of his fear of dementors, so don't be surprised if these scary fellows show up frequently in the game.

Thankfully, you can actually control all three kids—Harry, Hermione, and Ron. You start off controlling just Harry at first (he's still the main character), but later on, you gain the ability to dynamically switch between all three at any time. Each character has a unique set of spells—for example, Hermione is the only character who can cast ice spells, which turns out to be key for one of the bosses later on. Ron has a special sixth sense that lets him detect danger early on.

New spells and items aside from Hermione's ice spell include the patronus, which protects you from dementors, and the marauder's map, which shows the location of every character in Hogwarts. Another cool addition is Buckbeak, a hippogriff that you can hop on and ride around Hogwarts.

The most interesting addition is the slate of EyeToy games that comes bundled with the PS2 version. Accessible right from the beginning are six *Harry Potter*-style minigames, which range from catching snitches in Quidditch to grabbing chocolate frogs. If you pick up the GameCube version, you'll be able to connect your GBA for an additional "owl care kit" bonus. All in all, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* will have both a solid game and neat extras, depending on the version you buy. ➔



➔ *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, based on the third *Harry Potter* book and movie, promises to be a darker turn for the game series. Parents, take heart: It's still PG friendly, even with the appearance of the soul-sucking dementors. The bonus EyeToy games add a nice touch.



Prisoner of Azkaban? That sounds like some sort of foreign movie from the '30s!

I can't take you anywhere, can I?





# THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

SYSTEM XB  
PUBLISHER Vivendi Universal Games

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios

STAR POWER: Vin Diesel, Cole Hauser,  
Xzibit, Ron Pertman

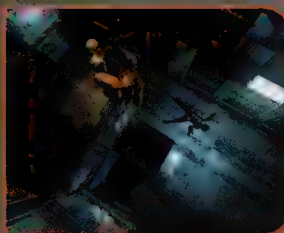
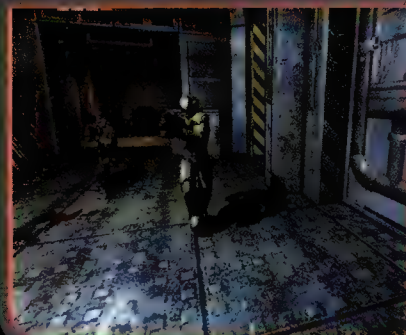
GAME RELEASE: June 1  
MOVIE RELEASE: June 11



→ We don't know exactly how it will play, but as these screens show, *The Chronicles of Riddick* is easily one of the best-looking Xbox games to date.

Kind of hard to "think PlayStation" on Xbox, if you ask me.

I could look like Vin if I wanted to, you know. I just don't want to.



➔ It's not necessary to have seen Vin Diesel's *Pitch Black*, but it helps to place *The Chronicles of Riddick* in context. Released in 2000, *Pitch Black* was a solid and surprisingly likable riff on *Aliens*. The upcoming *Chronicles of Riddick* movie and game are actually prequels to *Pitch Black*. Vin Diesel's character (Riddick) is once again a convicted prisoner in a future time and details his escape from the triple-max security prison Butcher Bay.

Those of you who have seen *Pitch Black* will recall how the monsters hunted only in complete darkness. One of Riddick's quirks is that his weird eyes can actually see in such dark conditions, and that's an actual gameplay element now. There's going to be a fair amount of stealth, so Riddick's ability to move silently, plus his exceptional eyesight, makes him excellent at sneaking around.

Don't think that Riddick aspires to be the next Solid Snake, though. He'll also do a lot of talking and straight-up killing in Butcher Bay. Riddick can freely roam most of the prison with reckless abandon and obtain missions or items from different prisoners. Of course, if you decide to just brawl your way through, Riddick has the proper skills. Besides a wide variety of punches and hooks for boxing, Riddick

can also pull off slick combo moves, silent (or loud) neck-breaks, or just pick up a gun and end things quickly. His weapons range from simple shivs and brass knuckles to heavy firepower like miniguns or grenades.

Most of the time, the game's in first person (to give that whole "you are Riddick" feel), but occasionally, the camera will pull back to a third-person perspective. While it's neat to see Riddick in third person, it feels more badass to just punch people in first person. With an almost two-week lead, you'll get to partake in these intergalactic prison hijinks well before the movie comes out. **B+**





► **Q&A** *Spider-Man* features an open-ended gaming environment, letting our hero climb and swing from invisible to mission in vast cityscapes. Featuring the voice of Kirsten Dunst (see sidebar), *Spider-Man 2* is set to swing into stores in time for the movie's June 30 release.



## SPIDER-GIRL



*Spider-Man* and *Giant* is getting lucky. That's because actress Kirsten Dunst, who plays Mary Jane Watson in both Spidey movies, has signed on to do the voice of her character in Activision's *Spider-Man 2* (a role she didn't play in the first game). And she agreed to the exclusive interview with **GMR**.

The ease with which she handled the sessions at Woodholy Studios in Los Angeles this past February is any indication, this game (and certainly interview) might not be her last.

You didn't do Mary Jane's voice in the first *Spider-Man* movie game. So why did you do it this time? I thought it would be fun. I've never done it before. But voice work is always fun to do.

You've done a couple of cartoons. Is doing a voice in a cartoon any different from doing one in a game? Actually, this was a lot easier. It was not a long process. It took like 20 minutes—we just did a couple of takes. But then, all I'm saying is stuff like "Spidey, help!"

Do you think this was any easier for you to do because you were doing the voice of a character you've played in two movies?

Yeah. I know the scenarios and everything, and I know exactly where they take place in the movie, so it was really easy for me to do.

Before you signed up for this, how much of the game did you see?

I actually haven't seen any of it. But I did just see an early version of Mary Jane, which they showed me so I could make sure the character looks like me. But I don't think I want her to look that much like me. It might freak me out if she looked a lot like me.

How does the second *Spider-Man* movie compare to the first?

For me and my character, the drama continues. She's moved away from her family, she lives in the city, and she's engaged to this astronaut....

Is that J. Jonah Jameson's son?

Yeah, exactly. Peter's kind of out of her life because he's never around, so there's a lot more drama there. But there's just a lot more of everything in it. And we have Alfred Molina in it as Doctor Octopus; he's just great.

So are you into videogames?

No, I don't have the time. I don't have enough time to read, let alone play videogames. Though if I see an arcade, I always play *Pac-Man*. That's my game.

## SPIDER-MAN 2

SYSTEMS: GC/PS2/XB  
PUBLISHER: Activision  
DEVELOPER: Activision

STAR POWER:  
KIRSTEN DUNST: Mary Jane Watson  
GAME RELEASE: June 2004  
MOVIE RELEASE: June 30, 2004

► *Spider-Man*, everybody's favorite webheaded comic superhero, is swinging into high gear once again this summer in *Spider-Man 2*, the upcoming big-screen sequel. To coincide with the movie's release, Activision is putting the finishing touches on a brand-new action-adventure that follows and expands on the movie's story line. But this is no ordinary sequel—*Spider-Man 2* improves upon its predecessor in a number of ways, most notably with a huge, open-ended environment.

Once again assuming the guise of *Spider-Man*—aka Peter Parker, former science-geek-turned-radioactive-powered-superhero—you'll explore a vast 3D metropolis, climbing and swinging your way around a fully realized version of Manhattan. While the game does contain a central, linear story thread, plenty of emphasis is placed on the experience of living life through *Spider-Man*'s eyes. Performing good deeds, helping citizens in need, and busting a few random criminal heads are all in a day's work for our webslinging hero. That and swinging around the city like a maniac—which is done with considerable grace, thanks to the game's improved physics engine.

The main story line follows the plot of the movie, which probably means a bit of nasty business with the creepy, multitentacled Doctor Octopus. Other familiar *Spider-Man* faces, such as Mary Jane Watson and Harry Osborn, should also be making appearances, as well as a few other classic foes including Mysterio and Electro. And, of course, there are plenty of faceless miscreants to beat up, giving you ample opportunity to put the new combo-based fighting system into action. Expect lots of fancy acrobatics, dodging, and web attacks as you put the hurt on Manhattan's criminal element.

Watch out—here comes the *Spider-Man*. Look for the game to swing on to store shelves in late June, just in time for Spidey's silver-screen adventure. **IG**

You know what they need to make? A game based on the old *Spider-Man* show from the '70s.

Wow. That's a terrible idea.





## COMING SOON

Here are three more movie-based games reportedly in the works. We're particularly excited about *The Godfather*. We're betting EA will use the "offer you can't refuse" line in its ad campaign.

### SAHARA

PLATFORM: PC  
PUBLISHER: TBD  
DEVELOPER: TKO Studios  
RELEASE DATE: Summer 2005



Author Clive Cussler's most infamous character, Dirk Pitt, a roguish treasure hunter in the vein of Indiana Jones, will be brought to screens in 2005. Production on the game is already well underway by TKO Studios, from the solid engine filled with dynamic lights to the brawling gameplay, rife with stuff to smash.

### THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE

PLATFORM: GC/PC/PS2/XB  
PUBLISHER: THQ  
DEVELOPER: Heavy Iron  
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2004



SpongeBob, Patrick, and pals must make a perilous journey away from Bikini Bottom and on to...dry land! Heavy Iron Studios, the same development team behind THQ's previous *SpongeBob* game, helms this release, which will feature new driving sequences, action, and celebrity voices. The game will be out three weeks before the movie's Thanksgiving release.

### THE GODFATHER

PLATFORM: TBD (most likely PS2/XB)  
PUBLISHER: EA Games  
DEVELOPER: EA  
RELEASE DATE: N/A



Little is known thus far about this M-rated game based on the infamous movies and books. A gangsta-era *Grand Theft Auto*-style game? A story directly from the movie? Fredo's Pasta Revolution? Who knows, but with EA's solid tradition of movie tie-ins and the rumored signing of all of the original movie's actors to do the voices, this could very well be a game you can't refuse.



→ This ain't your father's Catwoman. Oscar winner Halle Berry dons the ears, tail, and claws, but not the Batman as she avenges her own death at the hands of an evil cosmetics executive. As these screens prove, cats always land on their... hands.



Do you think I'd look good in that cat suit?

Hell, I think I'd look good in that cat suit.



## CATWOMAN

SYSTEMS: PS2/XB/GC/PC/GBA  
PUBLISHER: EA Games  
DEVELOPER: EA UK  
STAR POWER: Likenesses of Halle Berry, Sharon Stone,

Benjamin Bratt, and other stars; voiceovers TBD  
GAME RELEASE: July 2004  
MOVIE RELEASE: July 23, 2004

→ For this summer's blockbuster film from Warner Bros., forget everything you know about Catwoman. No longer is Catwoman the alter ego of Selina Kyle. No longer does she roam Gotham City stealing its valuables. No longer does she have anything to do with the Batman universe.

Now that she's been approved by the WB corporate machine, the new and "improved" Catwoman hits the big screen in the form of Halle Berry. Upon being resurrected from the dead by a rare Egyptian cat, Patience Phillips acquires feline agility and senses—the perfect tools for getting revenge on Laurel Hedare (played by Sharon Stone), the beautiful yet evil icon of the cosmetics industry who had her killed in the first place. Really, we're not making this stuff up!

EA's *Catwoman* game follows the plot of the film as you control a digitized Halle Berry through seven Lake City locations. In classic beat-em-up fashion, Catwoman takes on droves of malicious Hedare Cosmetics employees at once, sometimes toying with them before she renders them helpless or scares them into submission.

And silly as they may seem to anyone wanting something more akin to DC Comics' traditional Catwoman, her powers should do a lot to enhance gameplay. Beyond the catlike agility that makes her an amazing fighter with outstanding acrobatic skills, other unique abilities enable Catwoman to see in the dark and trail enemies by seeing their footprints or smelling their trails.

Expect to meet up with other important characters from the film as the game goes on, like love interest Detective Tom Lone (Benjamin Bratt). Boss fights include a climactic confrontation with Laurel Hedare, plus skirmishes with Armando (her lead henchman, played by Michael Madsen in the film) and Wesley (Byron Mann), Laurel's evil and twisted accountant. **IC**

XB  
PC  
PS2  
GBA  
GC



# NO WOMEN NO CH

GMR trades words with *Onimusha 3*'s resident cleaner—internationally acclaimed actor Jean Reno—to get his thoughts on his first starring role in a videogame, strapping on a butt mass of pong-pong balls, and preparing for a role like no other

**B**orn Juan Moreno Errera y Rimenés, the man more famously known as Jean Reno is the big-name international attraction, muscular leading man, and extra dimension that defines *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege*. The *Onimusha* series of games has always cast an actor in the leading role—*Onimusha Warlords* showcased Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro, while *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny* was a surprising homage to the late actor Yusaku Matsuda. While *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege* features the return of Kaneshiro in a reprise of his role as Samanosuke Akechi, it's Reno's turn as French military officer Jacques Braun that commands center stage.

Games such as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *True Crime: Streets of L.A.*, *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing*, and the upcoming *DRIV3R* all feature Hollywood-caliber voice talent, but none as compelling as that of the Moroccan-born Jean Reno. With the star of such films as *Leon: The Professional*, *The Big Blue*, *Ronin*, and *Mission: Impossible* lending his likeness and voice to a videogame, it seems as if it's only a matter of time before the rest of the industry (or those publishers who can afford it) take heed and do likewise.

In the spirit of our cinematically inspired issue, we tracked down Mr. Reno for the longest minute-long interview of our lives. With *Leon: The Professional* clocking in on a certain staffer's favorite-movies list, we consider it a pretty big coup to get Reno's thoughts and insights on his first (and hopefully not last) videogame appearance. Here's what he had to say...



# CHILDREN

**GMR:** You're an internationally renowned actor. How does it feel to be immortalized in a videogame?

**JR:** I consider each film, each play, and, now, each game as a milestone. This is another milestone in my career.

**GMR:** What were the motion-capture sessions like? Was it surreal being dressed up in a motion-capture suit?

**JR:** Yes, motion capture was the most difficult aspect of working on the game. When you are performing motion capture by yourself or with a partner, you have to understand and re-create what will be the final result in the game. You really have to use your imagination in order to get the best results.


**GMR:** We're glad that you offered your voice talents for the game. How do you normally prepare for a role, and did you have to make any special adjustments for *Onimusha 3*?

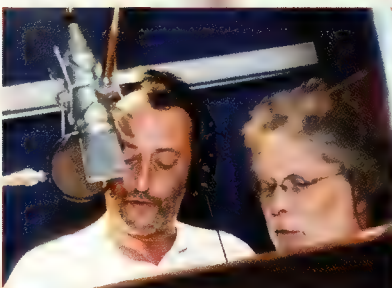
**JR:** My method in early production of a play, movie, and game is to go by my instincts and try to understand the script and ambience that is going to be portrayed on stage or onscreen. Working with the director and with his direction, we develop chemistry for the character I am portraying.

**GMR:** What do you think of the *Onimusha* team? Did they help you adjust to the strange world of the videogame's creation?

**JR:** I'm an old guy now, and I admire the youthfulness of the *Onimusha* team. They did their best to explain to me the details of making the game, and I hope the final results I gave to the project are good for them. The game is fantastic.

**GMR:** If you could be in another videogame, what sort of game would you like to be in?

**JR:** I do not have any ideas for the future. I'm a little superstitious because I come from the theater. For the moment, let the audience get a hold of the game, enjoy it, and then we'll decide the future. 



PS2



# NOW

As DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince once proclaimed, "SUMMERTIME!" Certainly, one does not need verbs or complex sentence structure to know what they're getting at. Historically, the summer months have been slow for gaming, since everyone's out enjoying barbecued meats and outdoor watersports, but there are a few reasons to stay inside...



## HOW WE RATE

WARNING! WHEN MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF A GAME ARE REVIEWED, GTR WILL MENTION DIFFERENCES ONLY IF THEY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY.

YOUR GUIDE TO THE GTR SCORING SYSTEM

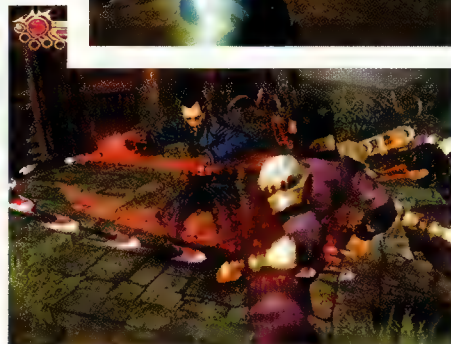
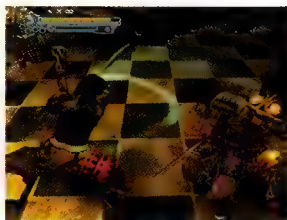
1 AWFULNESS 2 DASTARDLY 3 PITIFUL 4 DUPS 5 AVERAGE 6 GOOD STUFF 7 RECOMMENDED 8 EXCELLENT 9 TOTALLY SICK 10 TIMELESS CLASSIC

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→ The farther you get in the game, the better your weapon selection becomes. When you can freeze enemies and shatter them with Jacques' frosty hammer, or rip them to shreds with his ivy-like Oni Whip, you'll learn to embrace the combat.



PS2

# ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE

VIVE LA FRANCE!

MATURE | PS2

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM  
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
PRICE: \$49.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1  
ORIGIN: JAPAN

➔ If there's anything about *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege* that doesn't seem to fit with Capcom's action-game legacy, it's that this third part in the star-studded demon-slaying trilogy seems—if anything—unconventionally calculated for the masses. The series, which in its early days suffered from shortsighted “*Resident Evil* with samurai zombies” evaluations, has certainly come into its own. The first game offered competent hack-n-slash action set against 2D prerendered backdrops. The second game kept to the formula but raised the visual quality twofold while adding a grip of other playable characters. *Onimusha 2*, however, was a

disappointment at the box office, and so comes the final installment of the trilogy, bursting at the seams from the involvement of not one, not two, but three notable cinematic forces. The results are tangible.

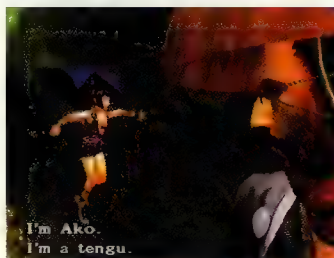
The addition of Jean Reno to the roster as the modern-day protagonist from France is nothing short of inspired. The participation of an actor of such broad international appeal hardly occurs by accident—Capcom clearly wants this game to succeed worldwide. Returning is Takeshi Kaneshiro, reprising his role as the samurai Samanosuke Akechi (sure to comfort fans of the first game), while Hong Kong action-film star Donnie Yen (*Iron Monkey*, *Shanghai Knights*)

provides the stunning wireworks combat choreography showcased in *Demon Siege*'s groundbreaking CG cinematics.

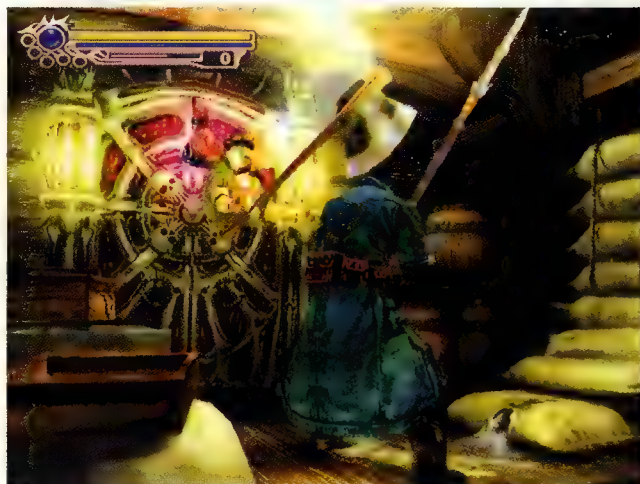
This isn't some gratuitous exercise in excess, though. Each actor's presence is integral to the proceedings, and simple pleasures like listening to Reno recite his dialogue in French is a sublime treat. However, the fact that this high-profile voice talent only appears in the beginning and at the end of the game (English-speaking surrogates clown the rest) is a disappointment.

Hollywood aside, one of *Demon Siege*'s most significant differences from past episodes is the injection of three-dimensional backgrounds in lieu of prerendered 2D panoramas. The effect is





→ *Animusha 3* rationalizes the characters' overall transition into speaking the English language early into the game via Ako, a flying tengu fairy who speaks directly to the minds of our heroes.



subtle and attractive, as modern-day France and feudal Japan are rendered in lavish detail. This gives life to the proceedings, as the slight undulations in perspective liven up the gameplay by immersing the player in his habitat. Unfortunately, the character models, while detailed, don't look as lavish as those in *Animusha 2* due to the extra geometry spent on the game's backgrounds. And since the game is still played from fixed perspectives, the camera (and finicky auto-targeting system) remains your worst enemy during many fast-paced battles.

In general, though, this does not deter from what is otherwise a rollicking good time. The three playable characters

and their diverse styles—Samanosuke's sword-swinging close-quarters action, Jacques' medium-range whip-action pistol-grip technique, and Michelle's (Jacques' girlfriend) long-distance trigger finger—control perfectly, thanks to the implementation of taut analog control. The variety of upgradeable weapons that each can equip (such as Jacques' frosty mace) is plentiful, and *Animusha* veterans will be glad to see the return of some classic weapons.

This is in fact everything you have ever loved about *Animusha* buffed out to the max. The puzzles are plentiful (especially the little puzzle boxes), the action is nonstop, the scenario is epic in scope (it takes over a dozen hours to

beat the game), and the ever-present Phantom Realms are bolder than ever (although made easier by our heroes' hovering tengu helper, Ako).

*Animusha 3* may not mess with the formula too much, but that works to its benefit. To fans of the series, *Demon Siege* will fit like a glove, while newcomers will merely bask in all this multimedia extravaganza has to offer. **B+**

—James Mielke

**GMR** 9/10

BETTER THAN: NIGHTSHADE  
NOT AS GOOD AS: NINJA GAIDEN  
WAIT FOR IT: KILLER 7

## 2ND OPINION

Special mention needs to be made regarding *Animusha 3*'s jaw-dropping opening cinematics. The CG work is probably the best I've ever seen (yes, better than Nemco and Square), but it's also marvelously choreographed and directed. A great way to begin a great game. **A-**  
—Andrew Pilster



# BATTLE AT THE HOUSE OF FUN

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE AND THE DEMONS HAVE BEEN PUT TO BED, GAMERS WANT TO FROLIC AND GAMBOL THROUGH THE GLADE. WELL, WE CAN'T RIGHTLY BLAME YOU, AND SO FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL, WE PEEK INSIDE *ONIMUSHA 3*'S VIRTUAL FUN BAG. YAHOO!

## THROW IN THE TOWEL

Anyone who has played the first two games knows that Keiji Inafune's team loves to put in loads of secret costumes, and *Onimusha 3* is no exception. To get Michelle's secret toweltastic costume, you must complete the game once with Onimusha ranking. To unlock Samanosuke's secret panda costume from the first game (now with two panda chillluns!), complete the training mode.

Samanosuke's cowboy outfit requires that you have a game save from *Onimusha Blade Warriors* on your memory card. Special outfits for Samanosuke and Jacques are unlocked once you beat normal mode once.



## COLLECT THE SWORDS

*Onimusha 3: Demon Siege* features more secret weapons than ever before, and for that we give the dev team big props. Longtime supporters of the series will be glad to know that the three original weapons from the first *Onimusha* are unlockable in maxed out form. What you need to do is find the three key items from the Phantom Realms in the underwater temple and Mont. St. Michel. Find those items, and when you start a new game, these weapons will be available when Samanosuke first warps to modern-day France. Other special weapons are stashed in the game, but it's up to you to find out how to get them.



## MINIGAME MARATHON

In case the regular game just isn't enough for you insatiable types, *Onimusha 3* features tons of minigames, such as the Adventures of Heihachi (complete the game once), or the shooting gallery-style Oni Target Practice (finish the game on Normal difficulty). A puzzle minigame is unlocked if you complete all of the game's puzzles, and a secret training mode is playable after beating the normal training mode.



## GARUGANTO GET!

Folks who picked up *Onimusha Blade Warriors* a couple months back, rejoice! If you have a game save from *Blade Warriors* on your memory card, and then play the new game, you'll encounter Garuganto (the bad guy from *03*'s opening cinema). If you survive (also known as "win") the ensuing battle, Garuganto will become playable in every mode except story mode. Now you get to kick his butt all over again!

PS2





# SIREN

## DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

MATURE | PS2

➔ It's amazing how much the survival-horror genre has evolved in a relatively short span of time and over just a few titles. Instead of just blood and guts, we're now seeing developers use increasingly sophisticated means to frighten the player, both with the schlocky-shock factor of *Resident Evil* and the psychological mind games of *Silent Hill* and *Fatal Frame*. Remarkable because it's a first attempt, *Siren* serves as the next bold step in the evolutionary process.

The story revolves around a small Japanese village that's been hit by an earthquake, which causes the river to flow blood red and turns the villagers into zombies. Your goal over the course of a few days is to guide the survivors through levels that jump through time, which helps to create a unique narrative and some interesting situations.

From top to bottom, every aspect of the game oozes atmosphere. The graphics are excellent, with sharply defined environments, nice fog effects, and superb lighting. The game actually features character models with the faces of real

Japanese actors. Even though the look is not exactly realistic, it works extremely well to help accentuate the strangeness of it all. The minimalist audio only adds to the tension, with the actual sound of the siren blaring through the darkness being both unsettling and a tad irritating, which here is a desired effect.

*Siren's* big calling card is your ability to "sightjack," which allows you to see what others are seeing. It's vital in determining the location of enemies when navigating hostile territory or in keeping tabs on an ally when the goal is to ensure his safety but separation is necessary. It's a brilliant innovation that's not only well conceived but also well executed. Plus, seeing yourself through the eyes of your killer just before your end is simply cool.

If there is one failing, it's the controls. Defending yourself is rather awkward, especially since the enemy is often faster than you. But otherwise, *Siren* is a worthwhile experience of surviving horror, highlighted by an innovation guaranteed to be shamelessly ripped off by others. **E**  
\_Matthew Hawkins

PUB SCEA PRICE \$39.99  
DEV SCEI PLAYERS 1  
REL AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN JAPAN

**GMR** 8/10  
MULTIFASCINATING

BETTER THAN: CLOCK TOWER 3  
ON PAR WITH: FATAL FRAME 2, CRIMSON BUTTERFLY  
WAIT FOR IT: SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

# ALIAS

## GUILTY DISPLEASURE

TEEN | XB [REVIEWED] | PC | PS2

➔ In a world where sneaking would give its good right arm to become the new shooting, agent Sydney Bristow emerges as the spy who hates you. As the star of *Alias*, the third-person adventure based on the eponymous hit TV show, Bristow finds herself plopped into a passable yet flawed espionage epic.

In *Alias*, or rather *James Bond Lite* with developed mammary glands, Bristow engages in the usual spy activities: clobbering bad guys with shovels, tossing soda cans to distract intellectually shriveled guards, collecting six bones in a museum, using a lock pick to escape her bonds so she can defuse a nuclear bomb with a three-letter code, and so forth. Fans of the show will be delighted to see Marshall, Vaughn, Jack, and Dixon play integral roles here—and because the setup is so poor, those unfamiliar with *Alias* will be forced to wonder who the hell these yappy people—especially Marshall—are who keep cutting in to give Bristow in-game instructions.

Stealth, ostensibly, should carry the game. It does not, simply because players are given little incentive to be stealthy. Guards, even in stealth mode with a halo to indicate their alert status, are inscrutable. It's impossible to tell what they can see, and more so, it's ridiculous to even try. Most enemies

can easily be pummeled into oblivion, and the rest can be run from with no confrontation.

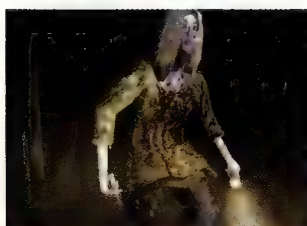
Vague mission details force a player to interpret the game's motives. What in the world does "explore the outer ruins" entail, exactly? During fights, Bristow can perform elegant wall flips and punishing attacks in which she'll grab a thug and toss him into a wall, but mostly, she'll just kick right through enemies until she's swatting at air with her back to them. The game may not be altogether terrible, but certainly, *Alias'* license to thrill was lost in the mail. **E**

\_Greg Orlando

PUB ACCLAIM PRICE \$49.99  
DEV ACCLAIM CHELSEAHAM PLAYERS 1  
REL AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN ENGLAND

**GMR** 5/10  
SP-4

ON PAR WITH: ROGUE OPS  
NOT AS GOOD AS: SPLINTER CELL, PANDORA  
TOMORROW  
WAIT FOR IT: METAL GEAR SOLID 3







Castlevania: Lament of Innocence—cool move  
 Fatal Frame 2—cool move  
 R: Racing Evolution—cool move  
 Jak II—cool move  
 True Crime: Streets of L.A.—download  
 Deer Hunter—download

## playable demos • inside the game • videos • replay • track GT4 • extras

NBA ShootOut 2004

Front Mission 4

Future Tactics: The Uprising

Alias

Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy

MX Unleashed

Transformers

Siren

Samurai Warriors

MLB Slugfest 2004

Shrek 2

DRIV3R

Polyphony digital  
 profile

Onimusha 3:  
 Demon Siege—  
 video trailer

Robota—  
 film teaser

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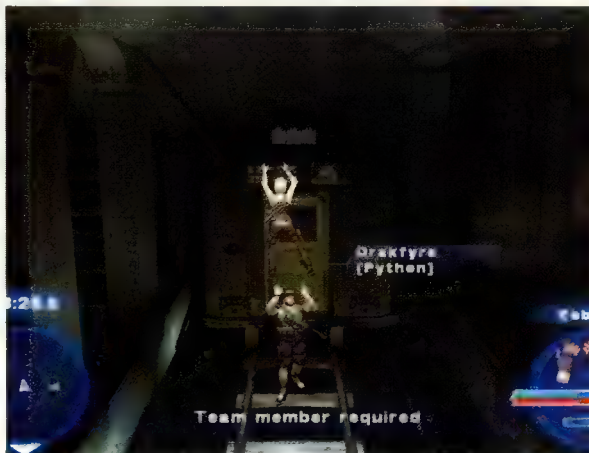
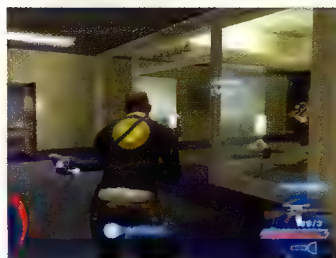
AND PLAYSTATION UNDERGROUND







→ *Omega Strain's* online setup is very nice. Users can form their own private cells, send messages to friends and cellmates, keep track of statistics, and organize matches with relative ease. Of course, the game not being that much fun to play renders all of this irrelevant.



PS2

# SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

ANTHRAX FOR YOUR SENSES

MATURE | PS2

PUBLISHER: SCEA  
DEVELOPER: SONY BEND  
PRICE: \$39.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)  
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ It's been a pretty good while since we've seen a *Syphon Filter* game, and *Omega Strain* doesn't quite inspire hope in the series' continued relevance. If this were four years ago, the game would be considered serviceable enough. But in an age in which A.I. and physics in squad-based shooters are at least semiconvincing, *Omega Strain* feels like the slow kid in class.

Case in point: If you run up to an enemy, unload half a clip into his face, and then run 10 feet away from him, he'll forget you exist. Sure, the banter he'll spew will make you think he and his boys are on your tail, but it's all just an act. These guys feel more like half-animate gun-mounted turrets than

living, breathing enemies. Watching them fall off buildings after you shoot them is even more laughable.

The game's online cooperative mode potentially could have redeemed it, but it's actually only a smidgen more compelling than going it alone. A handful of throwaway multiplayer-specific level elements—mostly hidden, team-accessible areas replete with bonus hardware—were added to the missions, but they're ultimately a sorry reason to replay scenarios that were kind of tedious to begin with. Their difficulty doesn't really ramp up with more players involved, either, so expect them to be over in a fraction of the time.

The fact is, shallow run-and-gun games like *Omega Strain* were more acceptable back in the PS1 days. Even the most uninspired games in this class (read: *Brute Force*) have, at the very least, a solid technical foundation. But *Omega Strain* is janky, and uninspired on top of it. The series was better off left buried rather than marred with a subpar effort like this. **D**

—Miguel Lopez

**GMR** DIRTY BOMB  
S 10  
NOT AS GOOD AS: BRUTE FORCE  
WHICH IS: VERY SAD  
WAIT FOR IT: KILLZONE

## 2ND OPINION

Playing *Syphon Filter* is like being on a bad blind date. It has a good enough personality, but after 10 minutes I started checking my watch, wanting to go home—and wondering what *Soccam II* was up to. "Looks like a high-res PS1 game" is sort of a cliché, but in this case it's true. **D**

—Andrew Pfister



# TRANSFORMERS

## MEDIOCRITY IN DISGUISE

TEEN | PS2

➔ It's taken nearly two decades and a countless number of consoles, but it's finally here: a chance to control Optimus Prime, if control is the right word for it. But is it worth the wait? At first glance, the answer would seem to be yes. But only a few minutes of playing Atari's *Transformers* will reveal there's not much more here than meets the eye.

The game revolves around the Autobots and the Decepticons as they battle over the Minicons. If you're an old-school Transformers fan, you're probably saying, "Mini what?" They're itty-bitsy Transformers that can enhance the abilities of whomever wields them. You choose from among three different Autobots—each with its own attributes, of course—to go on missions that center on the acquisition of these little bots.

The levels are huge and expansive. You'll navigate through a large variety of environments, but your goals will pretty much remain the same: go to whatever area, retrieve Minicons, use them to power up, repeat. The graphics are gorgeous, with lush terrain and sharp-looking character models. Everything is well defined and moves along at a very respectable framerate. Sound effects are acceptable, but the music is either nonexistent or just

"there" inoffensively in the background.

The controls are where the game falls apart: Movement is imprecise, with every jump a disaster waiting to happen; targeting an enemy with any degree of accuracy is simply impossible; the completely manual camera is guaranteed to give even a roller-coaster enthusiast motion sickness; and forget about actually transforming, unless you enjoy the idea of overturning repeatedly or being an easy target.

If you take away the large array of unlockables, including comic pages, galleries that showcase the toys (which not only detail their production, but how to transform them as well), and PSAs from the original show (old-time fans will definitely dig those), you're left with an above-average-looking game with below-average playability. **C-**

—Matthew Hawkins

PUB: ATARI	PRICE: \$49.99
DEV: MELBOURNE HOUSE	PLAYERS: 1
REL: MAY 2004	ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA

**GMR** BUMBLEBEE 5/10

BETTER THAN: VIRTUAL-ON MARZ  
NOT AS GOOD AS: ROBOTCH, BATTLECRY  
WAIT FOR IT: ASTROBOY



# MTX MOTOTRAX

## STEP AWAY FROM THE SCHWINN

EVERYONE | XB [REVIEWED] | PS2

➔ *MTX Mototrax* (which in a previous life would have been called "Somebody's Pro Motocross") shows just how well Activision can nail any extreme sport it puts its mind to. This time it's motorcycle racing on both indoor (supercross) and outdoor (motocross) tracks, along with some freestyle (trick) arenas and tracks thrown in for good measure.

The physics, camera, and controls are great: Everything feels perfect, and there's an awesome sense of speed (helped out by the rock-solid 60fps). The controls are amazing—you manage the compression of your suspension by pushing forward on the L stick, pulling down to get a "pop" at the edges of jumps. You can also disengage the clutch—while still revving the engine—by pushing the left trigger. Learning these techniques takes a few minutes, but mastering them is what the game is all about. You need to manage the clutch so you can keep up your speed around curves. For jumps, you need to get the compression right. That doesn't always mean maximum compression,

however—you need to judge what is right for the jump in question. The goal is to move smoothly around the track, and it's amazing how well the game conveys this when you're doing everything right (and how jarring and bumpy it feels when you're out of sync). Learning to master the bikes is just pure racing crack. You will try each race again and again until you have them down. This is good, because while they're strikingly beautiful, there are only 16 tracks.

There are also full season modes in motocross and supercross, team sponsorships, new clothes and bikes to earn, and a freestyle mode. Here, you run into characters and get little missions and challenges, as well as learn tricks. It's fun, but it feels sort of limited and isn't as fun as the races. The sound is excellent, and the graphics are about as good as you'll find on Xbox—meaning they're probably the best out there right now. Motocross may not have the innate appeal or celebrity endorsement of sk8ting, but *Mototrax* definitely feels like the real deal. **B+**

—Carrie Shepherd



PUB: ACTIVISION	PRICE: \$29.99
DEV: LEFT FIELD PRODUCTIONS	PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)
REL: AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN: U.S.A.

**GMR** DIRT MCCART 8/10

BETTER THAN: BMX XXX  
NOT AS GOOD AS: TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND  
WAIT FOR IT: TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

XB

PS2





→ Not alone in the dark: When not illuminated by the full moon, switch on CryVision to see what goes bump.



→ If your rig can handle it (requirements are rather steep), cranking up the resolution and color depth will transform *Far Cry* from "very pretty" into "best thing you've ever seen in your life." It's OK to sit back, relax, and just take in the scenery.

PC

# FAR CRY

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE. YOU'RE GOING TO DIE

MATURE | PC

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT  
DEVELOPER: CRYTEK  
PRICE: \$39.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-32 (ONLINE)  
ORIGIN: GERMANY

**→ Rational people do not scream at inanimate objects. So why is there the compulsion to take the *Far Cry* discs, crack them in half, melt them down in the microwave, strap the remains on a rocket, and send the whole damn thing hurtling into the sun's fiery wrath? Because oftentimes the game, at the risk of sounding like a 5-year-old, is just not fair.**

To wit: On multiple occasions, it took six shotgun blasts at point-blank range to eliminate a single guard. Six. Two direct sniper hits to an unprotected skull were not sufficient to take down another sentry—a third was needed before his wild yet oddly accurate machine-gun fire could be

stopped. From 200 yards across a river, a hail of enemy gunfire manages to find you in near-absolute darkness, but retaliating by emptying an entire clip into something that looks like it could be the guy shooting at you will result in only that: an empty clip.

This lack of balance is *Far Cry*'s biggest, and actually only, problem. Ignoring the retreaded mutation-experiment-gone-awry plot and the cardboard characters (enemies will actually utter the phrase "I'm going to shoot you in the face!"), everything else about the game is brilliant. *Far Cry* is visually stunning, from both a technical and artistic perspective: The lush jungle greens and clear ocean blues

contrast nicely against the dimly lit, grungy interiors. The game is also paced very well, alternating outdoor and indoor combat so things don't become repetitive, and it offers well-designed levels and scenarios. People with high blood pressure might want to stay away, but if you can tolerate unreasonably difficult A.I., *Far Cry* will punish you. And you will like it. **IC**

**Andrew Pfister**

**GMR**

BETTER THAN: DEVIL MAY CRY  
ON PAR WITH: UNREAL II  
WAIT FOR IT: HALF-LIFE 2

TEARS IN HEAVEN  
**7/10**

## 2ND OPINION

*Far Cry* is the first PC game in a long while that feels truly next generation in terms of both gameplay tactics and presentation. While it isn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination, *Far Cry* is certainly a strong contender for PC game of the year. Well done. **IC**

**Chen Chau**  
previews editor, K&N



## REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

destruction derby arenas → mega man battle chip challenge

# DESTRUCTION DERBY ARENAS

## WHO'S GOING TO DRIVE YOU HOME?

TEEN | PS2

➔ The *Destruction Derby* series has always been about driving fast cars and smashing into stuff. Clearly, it has the young male demographic more or less figured out. But for the sake of *Destruction Derby Arenas*, Studio 33 had better hope that the attention deficits of America's youth match up with the game's relatively short playtime.

Within one hour of play, any gamer with a modicum of talent will be able to unlock all 20 tracks, along with a majority of the vehicles. After that, it's a matter of running through the game with each vehicle and maxing out its stats. It's not that *Arenas* is particularly easy, it just has an odd balance. The first four races of a circuit are street courses, while the final event is an arena battle against all the other cars. Even if you place poorly in the preceding street races, a huge point difference in the overall standings can easily be made up by taking first in the arena race...a surprisingly simple task.

Prolonging the experience is the online mode, but even that fails to keep one's interest because it's basically the same as the single-player game...just with 19 human opponents instead of A.I. drivers. The specialized tag-style modes are fun for a while, particularly because they involve explosions, but even these modes quickly wear thin.

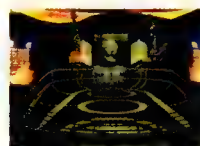
It's disappointing because it's been a while since we've seen a *Destruction Derby* title, but *Arenas* ends up being a more worthwhile weekend rental than a lifetime purchase. **C**

—Andrew Pfister

POP GATHERING PRICE \$29.99  
DEV STUDIO 33 PLAYERS 1-20 (ONLINE)  
REL AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN U.K.

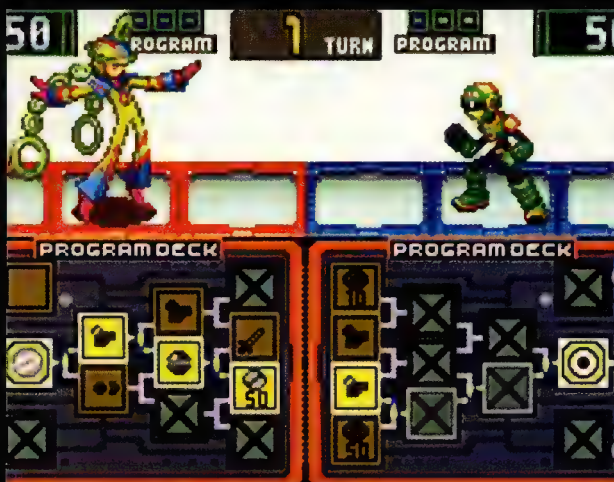
**GMR** FENDER BENDER  
5/10

BETTER THAN: WWE CRUSH HOUR  
NOT AS GOOD AS: BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT  
WAIT FOR IT: BURNOUT 3



PS2

GBA



POP CAPCOM PRICE \$29.99  
DEV INTECIGATES PLAYERS 1-2  
REL AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN JAPAN

**GMR** SHORT CIRCUIT  
2/10

ON PAR WITH: YU-GI-OH! DUELIST OF THE ROSES  
NOT AS GOOD AS: ANY MEGA MAN BATTLE  
NETWORK GAME  
WAIT FOR IT: BATTLE NETWORK 4

# MEGA MAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE

## ONE-BUTTON CHALLENGE

EVERYONE | GBA

➔ Over the years, Capcom has attempted numerous offshoots of the *Mega Man* series in an effort to diversify Mega Man's image, but with little success. Besides being lousy games, they simply didn't make much sense (e.g., *Mega Man Soccer*). So, despite the seemingly logical fusing of the *Mega Man Battle Network* series with a card-battling game, *Chip Challenge* has to go down as one of the worst *Mega Man* games ever.

Never mind the throwaway plot—it's entirely forgettable. There's a big tournament with a mysterious blah, blah, blah...you figure out the rest. Concerning the graphics, you've seen it all before. Literally. Virtually everything is lifted from prior games in the series. The music is your average *Mega Man* fare: hummable yet disappointingly unmemorable.

As for how it plays, get this: Before

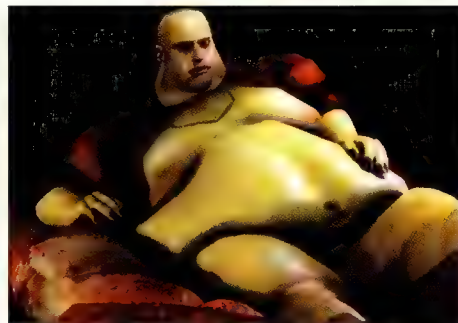
each battle, you place chips that allot offensive and defensive abilities on a grid. And during battles, the computer randomly selects which chips to use. That's it. There is absolutely no interactive control during a fight, unless you count using the A button to advance through numerous dialog boxes. And even that can be set on auto, so you can walk away while the game literally plays itself.

There is some "strategy" in placing chips in the right place, but ultimately, if you ever face off against an opponent who's stronger than you are, there's virtually no way to work toward pulling off a well-thought-out victory. You absolutely need to have comparable chips, period.

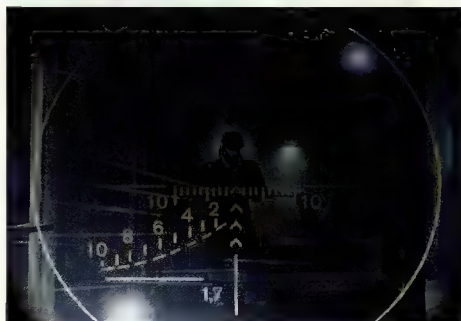
*Battle Chip Challenge* is an affront to *Mega Man* fans, card-battle enthusiasts, and gamers everywhere. **C**

—Matthew Hawkins





→ The Meat King is most pleased that you have decided to join him and his grotesque man breasts this evening. Come, sit down. Scooch a little closer. It's OK, the Meat King won't bite. Too hard. Hail to the King, baby.



XB

PC

PS2

# HITMAN: CONTRACTS

LO. I HAVE BECOME DEATH. DESTROYER OF SOUPS

MATURE | XB [REVIEWED] | PC | PS2

PUBLISHER: EIDOS  
DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE  
PRICE: \$49.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1  
ORIGIN: DENMARK

➔ As the adventure game moves from the frenetic to the cerebral, skulking has emerged as the new shooting. In this brave new world, the man with the shadows as his close friend is lord of the dance, and trial and error becomes the key that opens every door. Just not on the first attempt.

Eidos' third-person adventure *Hitman: Contracts* does gray and black like nobody's business. Killer number 47 works his way through a washed-out world filled with pulsing S&M parties, miserably rainy Asian nights, and creepy English manors. The environments are perfect places for the dirty deeds done by 47, as they all

seem inherently corrupted, and the designers have done an excellent job crafting this fun house.

Still, 47 doesn't interact smoothly with his world. His movements come right out of the Max Payne School of Character Articulation, with the antihero sliding and gliding across surfaces rather than running. When 47 deals with his targets, say, to strangle them with a wire, enemies react to failed strangulations not by running away or attempting to turn on their attacker, but by curling into a protective ball. *Contracts* also allows for a run-and-gun-type style of play that's wholly antistealth but actually quite effective; players can oftentimes complete their

mission by just bum-rushing a target, whacking him, and then fleeing to the escape zone. None of this feels right.

Strategic elements ensure that would-be assassins can creatively plan and plot their way to cold-blooded murder. When 47 gets to whack someone by cooking him in a sauna or poisoning his soup, all is wrong with the world. But in a very good way. **1C**

Greg Orlando

**GMR** WHACK **6/10**

BETTER THAN: MANHUNT  
NOT AS GOOD AS: SPLINTER CELL  
WAIT FOR IT: METAL GEAR SOLID 3

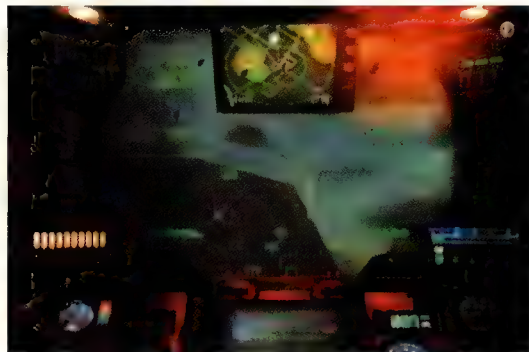
## 2ND OPINION

Provided all the trying and dying doesn't drive you to put a bullet in your own bald head, painting *Hitman's* canvases blood red is definitely worth the hassle. Slipping some scum a laxative so you can quietly snuff him in the crapper: priceless. **1C**  
—Shawn Elliott  
associate editor.  
EGM





→ A small detail that gamers shouldn't ignore is *LOC*'s excellent sound. As much effort that went into the tiny details of your cockpit and controller, so too did Capcom's designers sweat the sound design. If you have a 5.1 sound system at home, you'll hear every bullet whizzing by, every mortar crunching your VT to bits. You want brutal neomech reality? Crank the volume.



# STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT

THE HIGH COST OF HAVING FUN

TEEN | XB

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM  
DEVELOPER: NIDE MAKER  
PRICE: \$49.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-10 (ONLINE)  
REQUIRES: 40-BUTTON STEEL BATTALION CONTROLLER (SOLD SEPARATELY)  
ORIGIN: JAPAN

➔ It's rare that you see an experiment as wholeheartedly embraced as Capcom's over-the-top mech-combat simulator series, *Steel Battalion*. What other game bolts you into a gigantic game-specific controller, with each of the thing's 40 buttons having its own function? None. With *Line of Contact*, the weighty, monstrous mechs go stampeding online, with up to 10 players competing in teams, or in an all-out melee, in tremendous, futuristic warlike simulations.

The appeal for those with an Xbox Live account is tremendous. Pretty much everything here is the same as in the original *Steel Battalion*—which is

required, as *LOC* is not sold with a controller—except now the war is real and in your face with unpredictable online opponents. It's intense, noisy gaming that simulates struggling with a mechanical beast's controls in ways *MechAssault* never could. But getting up to speed with the controls in an online setting is brutal. If you're a newbie, it's important to hone your skills in the first game offline before braving *LOC*. Veterans will eat you alive.

Be warned, though, various game-balance issues and exploitable features that can be compensated for in an offline setting are nearly impossible to overcome when abused by competition with no qualms regarding unfair play.

If you can handle *LOC*'s steep learning curve, you'll enjoy an experience unobtainable on any other platform—the game is that compelling. But the lack of offline missions is regrettable, as is the inability to play using a standard Xbox controller. Here's hoping Capcom plans a third installment that includes the best of both worlds. **LE**

—James Mielke

**GMR** INKS 7/10

BETTER THAN, A CHEVY NOVA  
MAKES US WISH, WE COULD DRIVE A VT TO WORK  
WAIT FOR IT: ARMORED CORE NEXUS

## 2ND OPINION

*Line of Contact* is a brilliant premise marred by terrible execution. If you can manage to have flawless online sessions like James, you'll still have to contend with an archaic Xbox Live user interface and a terrible in-game chat system. As a big *Battalion* fan, I expected more. **LE**  
—Che Chou  
previews editor, *XBN*

XB



# DEAD MAN'S HAND

## HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

TEEN | XB (REVIEWED) | PC

➔ *Dead Man's Hand*, a first-person shooter set in the Old West, had the potential to be a decent title, if only because of its setting. Not many games are set in the world of brothels, saloons, and drunken cowboys, and it's a welcome change from plasma rifles and frag grenades in outer space or various realms of hell.

The story revolves around a sharpshooter named El Tejón who, upon objecting to the killing of innocent women and children, is attacked by his gang. Left for dead (hence the title), he quickly recovers, escapes from prison, and swears vengeance.

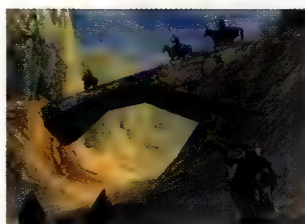
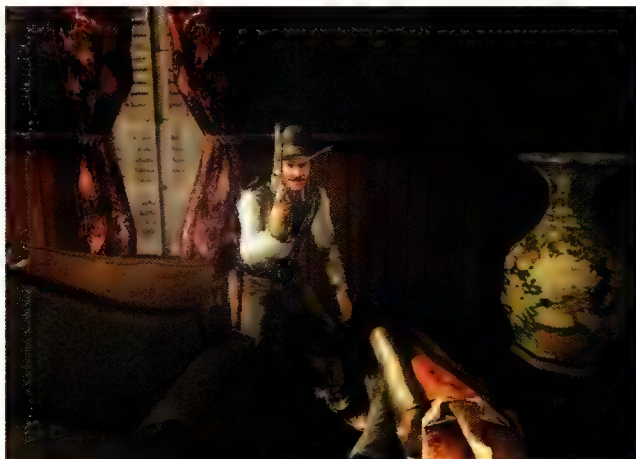
There are three main weapon categories (pistols, rifles, and shotguns), and each firearm has its own "special ability" that can be used when a player's meter is full. These include rapid fire, a sniper scope, and bizarrely, a stun shot from a double-barreled shotgun that doesn't kill enemies, even at point-blank range. Not very special.

The majority of the gameplay consists of walking around ghost towns while enemies snipe. Players can shoot wooden kegs—full of gunpowder, naturally—for explosive results, or shoot barrels, boulders, and other objects, causing them to fall and crush an enemy's head. Amusing, but nothing that hasn't been done before.

Unfortunately, *Dead Man's Hand* fails at almost every level. The framerate shudders like a dying horse, collision detection is spotty—it's possible to be awarded a "Hat Shot" after blasting an enemy in the groin—and foes barely flinch even when shot full in the face.

The only marginally innovative feature is the use of a combo system, which, as combo systems tend to do, increases damage for each successive hit. Online play via Xbox Live is supported, but with far better shooters more deserving of online attention, this title will meet an early grave. ☹

—Doug Trueman



PUB: ADAM DEV: HUMAN HEAD STUDIOS REL: AVAILABLE NOW PRICE: \$29.99 PLAYERS: 1-8 (ONLINE) ORIGIN: U.S.A.

GMR 4/10 UNFORGIVEN

NOT AS GOOD AS: SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER  
BETTER THAN: A DIRT NAP  
WAIT FOR IT: DARKWATCH

XB

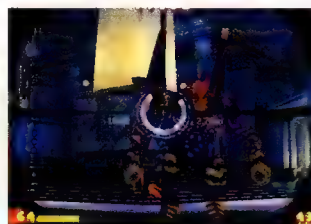
PC

PS2

GC



→ Kill enough frog things, multiarmed hell demons, and...well, pretty much anything with any sort of cellular structure, and Sam will enter a euphoric state where not only does the combo meter rise, but time and space will converge and the universe will collapse upon itself. All but the last part is true.



# SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

## SERIOUS VALUE

MATURE | PS2 (REVIEWED) | GC

➔ *Serious Sam: Next Encounter* is a classic run-and-gun first-person shooter for fans who like to mix it up with as many enemies as possible in the shortest amount of time. There are no colored key cards here, no obscure puzzles to be solved. *Serious Sam* harkens back to the good ol' days of *Doom* and *Quake*, when all that mattered was keeping the barrels of your guns from cooling off.

The environments and power-ups will remind FPS fans of *Quake 3 Arena*, while the core gameplay is like a three-dimensional version of *Robotron 2084*: Players are under constant fire from enemies at almost every given point, but armor, health, and ammo are just as plentiful. Strafing, leaping over enemy fire, grabbing clips, and simply surviving are the only things that matter, giving the gameplay an undeniable elegance. Sam himself puts it best early on in the game: "No running, no jumping, no horseplay; all that leaves is killing."

Unfortunately, Sam tries to come off like a modern version of Duke Nukem,

but the delivery of his one-liners falls flat, and the humor isn't as witty as it could be—but one has to appreciate the tongue-in-cheek references to gaming clichés.

The graphics and sound are far from revolutionary, the weapons basic, and the story a total throwaway, but when the gameplay is as fast and frenetic as this, no one will care. It's a twitch title for twitch gamers; leave your brain at the door. But if you're looking for a solid online shooter for less than 20 bucks, you really can't go wrong here. ☹

—Doug Trueman

PUB: CLIMAX DEV: JACK OF ALL GAMES REL: AVAILABLE NOW PRICE: \$19.99 PLAYERS: 1-8 (ONLINE) ORIGIN: U.S.A.

GMR 7/10 GOOD, HONEST KILLING

NOT AS GOOD AS: ARMED AND DANGEROUS  
BETTER THAN: UNREAL II (XBOX)  
WAIT FOR IT: UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2





→ Let's take inventory...standard on-foot soldiers? Check. Dune buggy with mounted cannon? Check. Heavily armored tank? Check. OK, looks like we got what we need.



# UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

WHERE DO ROCKETS GO WHEN THEY DIE?

TEEN | PC

PUBLISHER: ATARI  
DEVELOPER: EPIC GAMES  
PRICE: \$39.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-32 (ONLINE)  
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ It brings great joy to state the following: *Unreal* means serious business again. While *UT2003* was little more than a vehicle for the latest iteration of Epic's engine, *Unreal Tournament 2004* brings the goods in a big way—crazy new weapons, game modes, and vehicles. The season is ripe for destruction.

Onslaught mode will get the most play, thanks to its effective incorporation of *UT2004*'s new elements. All the vehicles that have been added to the game are littered throughout each team's spawn points, encouraging assaulters to hop in and raise hell. To keep things balanced, however, weapons capable of taking

out said vehicles are in no short supply via adjacent lockers—if you're getting harassed by flying Mantas and Raptors, bust out the new AVRiL missile launcher and blast away.

Essentially, onslaught plays like capture the flag on steroids. Each team has a set of nodes it must protect from destruction. Since they're arranged in a linear fashion in most maps, both teams' forward motion will generally cause them to meet in the middle and lay waste to one another. And as you can imagine, the level of carnage present when heavily armed foot soldiers and artillery-laden vehicles meet on the field is totally invigorating. One can't think of a better application

for *UT2004*'s most impressive new features.

You'll be hard-pressed to find a white-knuckle, multiplayer-focused FPS more intense than *UT2004* any time this year. With over 100 maps, 10 game modes, and arguably the most finely tuned FPS engine in PC gaming, there's enough here to satisfy even the most bloodthirsty among you. **1C**

**Miguel Lopez**

**GMR**

PLASMA JUICE  
**8/10**

BETTER THAN: *UT2003*  
FEELS LIKE: *QUAKE 3* IN ITS PRIME.  
WAIT FOR IT: *DOOM 3*

## 2ND OPINION

I've broken two mice playing this game. That's a good thing. *UT2004* is what the last *Unreal Tournament* should have been: fun. With the inclusion of assault, the ass-kicking onslaught, and a bunch of sweet, sweet vehicles, this game rocks. **1C**  
—Darren Gladstone  
previews editor,  
CGW

PC



# SAMURAI WARRIORS DON'T I KNOW YOU?

TEEN | PS2

➔ As loath as we are to admit it, the formula is wearing thin. If the deluge of *Dynasty Warriors* games released last year wasn't enough to put you off ancient China, then surely the various incarnations of *Crimson Sea* and their *DW*-in-space stylings were. Designed to test the patience of even the hardest Koei supporter, *Samurai Warriors* toys with the formula enough to jettison the ancient Chinese secrets and infuse it with a warring states, Nobunaga-era milieu. What little else *SW* adds to the equation is up for debate.

The problem is that *Samurai Warriors* gives off the impression of being little more than a big fat palette swap, meaning that this game is, in essence, *Dynasty Warriors* with Japanese archetypes supplanting the LuBus. In general, this is a good thing, as it gives a fresh coat of paint to a staling concept, but anyone looking deeper for a brand-new experience will most likely feel shortchanged.

The reason for this is obvious. Map after map throws players into large-scale skirmishes of historical origin with objectives usually cycling through the tried-and-true "Kill this general," "Protect this fortification," or "Prevent so-and-so from leaving the area" lottery we've seen so many times before. The maps are lifted directly from the *DW* school of design, and the preplanning

stages are also carbon copies of the original.

This doesn't prevent *Samurai Warriors* from being a solid game. It is still quite fun and offers significant replay value, so long as you don't mind the irritating camera work (the camera-centering button isn't nearly as reliable as it ought to be), the cheap backstabbing tactics of the enemy troops, canned victory and defeat animations, and the rapidly aging graphics engine.

The high-speed action of the *DW* games remains intact, with plenty of enemies to beat on using the series' signature Musou attacks. Items aplenty wait to be found, and repeated play creates stronger characters, which equals more devastating fun. For the *Dynasty Warriors* faithful, there is plenty here to enjoy, and for newbies to the series, this is as good a starting point as any. The disappointment, however, lies in wait for those who expected a greater leap forward and not yet another recycled cash-in. **C-**

James Mielke

Pub: KOEI  
Dev: OMEGA  
Rel: MAY 2004  
Price: \$49.99  
Players: 1-2  
Origin: JAPAN

**GMR 7/10**

BETTER THAN: CRIMSON SEA 2  
NOT AS GOOD AS: DYNASTY WARRIORS 4  
WAIT FOR IT: DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 EMPIRES



# TOCA RACE DRIVER 2: ULTIMATE RACING SIMULATOR VOLVO'S NOT INCLUDED

EVERYONE | XB [REVIEWED] | PC

➔ While most game developers spend hundreds of hours perfecting the physics, handling, and performance of just a single type of race car, the U.K. developers at Codemasters have been busy working on more than a dozen types and styles for a single game. *TOCA Race Driver 2: Ultimate Racing Simulator* lives up to its name because of the incredibly wide swath it cuts through the checkered flag. While games like *Gran Turismo* offer a variety of cars, *TOCA Race Driver 2* lets players drive vehicles from rallies, open-wheel grand prix, street racing, stock cars, super trucks, GT light racing, and even ice racing.

The heart of the game is the career mode, which features an Irish mechanic trying to hit it big with the help of an American blonde. Sparks fly between the two in elaborate cut-scenes as they argue about how to best help the player's career. Unlike

most racers in which players become accustomed to a single car over a series of tracks, *TOCA* begins with players racing convertibles. Victory leads to a race with the incredibly touchy Formula Ford vehicles, and from then on, players will find themselves behind the wheel of everything from an Aston Martin to a trailer truck.

*TOCA* has an elaborate physics engine in which damage not only affects a vehicle's handling, but can also render it inoperative. Up to 12 players can race over Xbox Live, local hot rods can compete via the System Link, and the CPU has no problem handling 21 cars against a single player. Cars take damage during long races but can be repaired in the pit for a time penalty. Players who want to challenge the online racing world without stopping to swap discs should give this a spin. **C-**

Doug Trueman

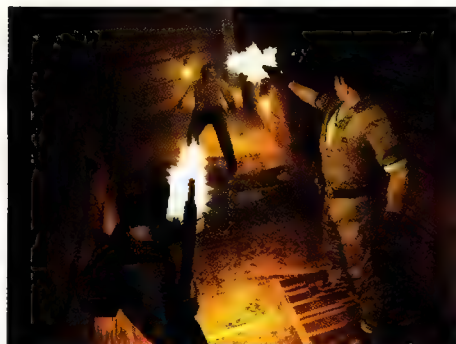


Pub: CODEMASTERS  
Dev: CODEMASTERS  
Rel: AVAILABLE NOW  
Price: \$39.99  
Players: 1-12 (ONLINE)  
Origin: U.K.

**GMR 8/10**

NOT AS GOOD AS: PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2  
BETTER THAN: RALLISPORT CHALLENGE  
WAIT FOR IT: GRAN TURISMO 4





→ Issuing the A.I. characters simple commands via the analog stick usually results in them running around in circles screaming, "Let me help you!"



# RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

## DEAD MAN'S PARTY

MATURE | PS2

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM  
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
PRICE: \$49.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)  
ORIGIN: JAPAN

➔ After five *Resident Evil* games, it's a wonder there's anyone left to terrorize in the wretched hellhole that is Raccoon City. Nevertheless, terror is still the name of the game in *Resident Evil Outbreak*, Capcom's newest chapter in its popular survival-horror franchise.

At first glance, *Outbreak* appears to be another typical entry in the *RE* canon—and that's pretty much exactly what it is. The game consists of five unconnected scenario missions, each filled with exploration, puzzles, and—you guessed it—tons of zombies. This time around, you choose from among eight model Raccoon City citizens, each with their own array of special items

and abilities. A group of half-wit A.I. characters accompany you through each scenario, chock-full of repetitive and annoying sound bytes.

The scenarios are typically pretty short—and with only five of them, you can run through the entire game rather quickly. That's where *Outbreak*'s big gimmick comes in: Up to four players can team up online, which theoretically equals replay value. Or it would, if there were anything unique about the scenarios besides a bit of added difficulty. Fallen players do have the option of chasing down their teammates as animated corpses, but that sort of novelty wears off fast. The game also lacks voice chat, which cuts

off all effective communication.

Online woes aside, *Outbreak* is a competent game that fans of the series should get a kick out of, even if it doesn't last long. And it does get one thing right: The controls are actually functional and somewhat intuitive. *Outbreak* makes for a fun weekend—just don't expect anything truly groundbreaking. **E**

—Ryan Scott

**GMR** 6/10

BETTER THAN: RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM  
NOT AS GOOD AS: RESIDENT EVIL (GAMECUBE)  
WAIT FOR IT: RESIDENT EVIL 4

### 2ND OPINION

Forget the zombies—the lack of chat capability (voice or keyboard) is the real horror in *Outbreak*, turning online play into a frustrating mess. Single-player is likewise annoying, thanks to A.I. "friends" who do exactly what you don't want. A gorgeous-looking game, but all rotting on the inside. **E**  
—Mark MacDonald  
executive editor.  
EGM

PS2





→ Because the game features only two basketballers, all those extra polygons can be poured into the character models. As such, *Ballers* sports the most accurate and lifelike characters in a sports game. The threads aren't bad, either.



# NBA BALLERS

SHOT CALLERS

EVERYONE | PS2 [REVIEWED] | XB

PUBLISHER: MIDWAY  
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY  
PRICE: \$39.99  
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW  
PLAYERS: 1-2 (ONLINE)  
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ Twenty years from now, when C- and D-list celebrities are cracking wise on VH1's *I Love the Aughts...Or Whatever It Is We Called the First Decade*, there'll likely be a segment on "bling"—this decade's ubiquitous cultural identifier, on par with tie-dye, Members Only jackets, and flannel shirts. Capitalizing on this, as well as society's infatuation with rich people's homes, Midway has taken its *NBA Jam* formula off the shelf, removed eight players and half a court, and blinged the living hell out of it. The result is a largely entertaining and uniquely personal game of basketball.

The singular apparent fault comes

in the return of computer-assisted A.I. This artificial balancing reveals itself early on in *Ballers*' otherwise well-conceived rags-to-riches mode. A duel with Kevin Garnett renders personal statistics irrelevant: He'll grab every board, make every steal, get every lucky bounce, and, heck, even blatantly goal-tend (and get away with it). All the while, your low-post specialist will shoot a paltry 37 percent from the field. It's cheap, it's frustrating, and it should have died in the '90s. Should Midway attempt a sequel (and it definitely should), this will be the biggest issue to address.

Thankfully, *Ballers*' other modes—especially the ones that involve another

human opponent—let the purity and psychology of 1-on-1 basketball shine through. There are no teammates to blame or complicated defensive schemes to learn...just two men, a ball, a basket, and an unholy amount of trash talking. It's not always realistic, but the proven mechanics ensure that it's fun...even when bling is no longer in. **B+**

Andrew Pfister

**GMR** 8/10

ON PAR WITH: NBA STREET VOL. 2  
WAIT FOR IT: MTV CRIBS: THE GAME!  
REMEMBER: JORDAN VS. BIRD?

## 2ND OPINION

Midway's profile may have receded somewhat with the resurgence of EA's own arcade-sports lineup, but the fact remains that *Ballers* rocks. This is the epitome of pick-up-and-play action. No hair-pulling clock management, no tedious excursions into "strategy." Just shot-blocking, three-point-popping good times. **B+**  
—James Mielke





## SPLINTER CELL PT SHOT IN THE DARK

TEEN | GBA

➔ Kindly allow us to cut to the chase: *Pandora Tomorrow* is not worth your time or money. Almost every aspect of the game feels rushed.

*Tomorrow* is technically competent, looks OK, and sports an array of hero Sam Fisher's nifty spy talents, but that's about it. It is, in fact, remarkably similar to last year's equally lackluster GBA edition, which wasn't impressive to begin with. This should not surprise: One can safely assume that Ubisoft safely assumes that sales will come foremost from the strength of the license, with innovation, creativity, and quality coming in at a distant second.

We'd be less inclined to carp were *Tomorrow* a pleasure to play. Sadly, not only is it not fun, it clashes on an intrinsic level with its home hardware. Progress can only be saved after the completion of a sprawling level. This maddening design decision is compounded by the fact that *Tomorrow*

is based on the strengths of its 3D forebear. Tense moments of creeping from shadow to shadow may have made its bigger, badder brother a fine exercise in gripping gameplay, but something—everything, actually—gets lost in the translation. High-stakes, high-intensity, all-or-nothing sorties are all fine and good in the comfort of your home, but the constant need to stop, scout ahead for infrared cameras, and wait for scripted guards to pass by just does not lend itself to gaming on the go. **C**

David Chen

PUB. UBISOFT	PRICE \$29.99
DEV. UBISOFT	PLAYERS 1-4
REL. AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN CHINA

**GMR** 4/10

ON PAR WITH THE FIRST GBA SPLINTER CELL  
 COULD BE GREAT ON NINTENDO DS  
 WAIT FOR IT: THE INEVITABLE SEQUEL

## GANGLAND SLEEPING WITH THE FISHES

MATURE | PC

➔ *Gangland* should have been a slick, gritty simulation of underworld economics lived up by fast action, deep unit development, and real-deal empire-building elements. But, as usually happens when you try to put too many spices in your gumbo, the whole thing wound up tasting like an armpit.

Its premise is enticing enough—as a recent immigrant from Italy, your job is to track down your traitorous siblings in New York City, curb their criminal ambitions (while nurturing your own), and ultimately kill them. In theory, you do this by building a criminal army, “enlisting” the aid of neighboring businesses, and stomping through town like the biggest dog there is. But in practice, the game actually plays like an anemic RTS that’s been released about six months before it should have.

The laundry list is distressingly long. You can’t pause during the game’s real-time battles, so issuing commands to your goons is more often than not a

pain in the ass. You also can’t really save during missions, so if you foul one up midway through, it’s back to square one. And fouling up is really easy, since your hired help isn’t particularly smart and pedestrians have a weird tendency to join in on skirmishes, seemingly picking sides at random. Same with the cops, despite how much bribe money you may have previously given them.

Ironically, once you get into the swing of things—running multiple rackets, setting up remote safe houses, and such—the whole deal just goes further south. It’s really hard to effectively respond to attacks from rival gangs across town given the game’s inherent shortcomings, so you’ll too often say, “Ah, screw it, what’s a single speakeasy worth?” We don’t need to remind you that that is the opposite of how a gangster should act, and *Gangland* is basically the opposite of how a gangster simulator should play. It’s curtains. **C**

Miguel Lopez



PUB. WHITMAN INTERACTIVE	PRICE \$39.99
DEV. MEDIA MONSTERS	PLAYERS 1-8 (ONLINE)
REL. AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN U.S.A.

**GMR** 4/10

NOT AS GOOD AS: MAFIA  
 WAIT FOR IT: GTA: SAN ANDREAS  
 ASKING FOR: CEMENT SHOES

PC

GBA



# RETROACTIVE

BROUGHT TO YOU THIS MONTH BY THE DIRECTORS OF YOUR FAVORITE GAMES

XB  
PC  
PS2  
GBA  
GC

## MOVIE GAMES

CLASSICS, CASH-INS, AND BARGAIN BINNERS



➔ Is it really a truism that games based on movies are crap more often than not? Is it a given that they're no more than interactive commercials for the films from which they are derived? *GMR* sounds off on six past movie-based titles—the great, the good, and the not so good.

### ENTER THE MATRIX TAKE PILLS TO ENJOY

GC/PC/PS2/XB | MAY 2003

➔ The *Matrix* movie may have inspired the "bullet time" idea upon which games like *Max Payne* and *Dead to Rights* built franchises, but by the time *Enter the Matrix* hit stores, bullet time was old news. So the developers had to come up with a new take on the idea, and they did: Instead of just slowing down time to improve your aim, the "focus" mode allows you to execute unique moves and fight better while slowing down time. This idea works fairly well. The rest of the game

doesn't, and it feels incomplete due to numerous glitches and repetitive levels. Looking back, it is a bad game, but it might have gotten a little more negative press than it deserved because people had such high expectations. **1C**

NOW... An average action game.

STANDARD  
6

THEN... A disappointingly average action game.

WHY?  
4



### GOLDENEYE STILL PLAYED IN COLLEGE DOORMS

N64 | AUGUST 1997

➔ If you haven't heard of *GoldenEye*, you're either under the age of 10, not a fan of any game with action in it, or reading the wrong magazine. *GoldenEye* was a breakthrough in 1997 for being the first game to provide a well-built multiplayer first-person shooter for a platform other than PC. The *GoldenEye* license is so highly regarded that Electronic Arts,

which currently owns the rights to make games based on James Bond, is now developing a sequel to it rather than an original Bond game like *Everything or Nothing*. Now that *Halo*'s control scheme has become the standard for first-person shooters on consoles, *GoldenEye*'s controls aren't so great to go back to, but it's still an excellent party game. **1C**

NOW... Can't compare to *Halo*'s controls, but the options and gameplay stand tall.

8

THEN... Great single-player game and some of the best multiplayer anywhere.

BEST  
10

### THE SCORPION KING: RISE OF THE AKKADIAN WORST OF THE MOVIE LOT

GC/PS2 | SEPTEMBER 2002

➔ Though we hope for good things from *The Rock* in the next *SpyHunter* game, *The Scorpion King* is not his finest hour. This is a perfect example of how all movie games once were: Its combat controls are too simplistic, it has an awkward story, the graphics are dull, and the only reason you should play it is if you are a huge fan of the movie. These days, we expect better. We expect more fighting maneuvers, better controls, well-done

cinemas, and games that look at least something like the movie. The game does include a load of secrets, but you have to decide if you really want to put in the few hours it takes to beat the game to find them. **1C**

NOW... This isn't even that good of a license.

WADON  
3

THEN... Another game that will sell only because of its license.

WHY?  
4





# SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE

## SWING, SWING, SWING

GC/PC/PS2/XB | APRIL 2002

➔ *Spider-Man: The Movie* is a sequel of sorts to the PS1 *Spider-Man* games, yet it ties into the movie as well—a weird combination, but one that should have led to a polished game, since the developers had worked with the character in two previous games. For the most part, it's a good game with decent fighting, and the outdoor webswinging is a lot of fun (though it appears that the swinging in the upcoming *Spider-Man 2* will blow it

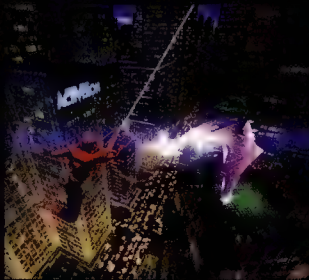
away—the advancements in the sequel could make this game look a lot worse in a few years). Our main criticism back then was that the indoor segments weren't as exciting as the outdoor ones, which still holds true today. **IC**

NOW... The game engine is starting to show its age.

7

THEN... Nothing we haven't seen before, but still good.

8



# THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

## HACK 'N' SLASH 'N' HACK AGAIN

GC/PS2/XB | OCTOBER 2002

➔ Now that we've seen from *Return of the King* how well the *Lord of the Rings* movies can mix with the games, *The Two Towers* almost seems like a game that had to be made before *ROTK* could fulfill its role as the ideal movie-game connection. This is the game that did everything halfway—there's some movie footage, but it's not integrated as well as it could be. There's a decent selection of characters, but you can't play cooperatively. There's a lot here that showed potential that is now overshadowed by *ROTK*. At the time, *Two Towers* was a decent beat-em-up that survived by holding on to the movie license, but if you've played *ROTK*, it might be hard to go back. **IC**



NOW... Overshadowed by *The Return of the King*.

7

THEN... More movie connections than most film tie-ins.

8



# THE HULK

## SMASH. SMASH. REPEAT

GC/PS2/XB | MAY 2003

➔ As a way to incorporate the two personalities of Bruce Banner, the developers split *Hulk's* gameplay into two styles: stealth as Banner and all-out action as the Hulk. Sadly, rather than serving as a way to add variety, this proved tedious, since the stealth segments slow down the pace and feature poor level design. The action portions are better and provide a good feeling of power, lots of items in the background to pick up and throw, and destructible environments, but even those sections feel repetitive.

The whole game is uneven, and neither type of gameplay can match up to similar games in the same genres. It's

still a fun little beat-em-up, but there are better options out there. **IC**



NOW... Just another beat-em-up.

6

THEN... Interesting visuals and simple controls.

6



# VALKYRIE PROFILE

## THE ASHES OF DEAD HEROES

PS1 | AUGUST 2000

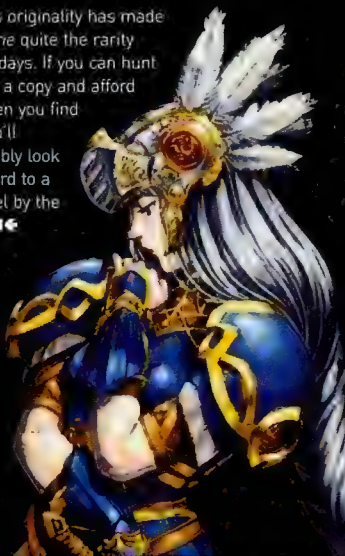
➔ For a genre fans embrace as an "alternative" to conventional games, RPGs are awfully tied to convention themselves. *Final Fantasy*-style epics are fun, but they tend to be put together like Tinker Toys. It's easy to pick out the bits of other games that wound up recycled to make a new one.

*Valkyrie Profile* is an exception, even for its own developer. Tri-Ace's *Star Ocean* games are first-rate, and *Star Ocean 3* may be 2004's best RPG, but *Valkyrie* stands alone as the most original RPG of its generation.

Nothing about *Valkyrie* is conventional. Flashy 3D? No, beautiful hand-drawn graphics. Turn-based combat? Yes, but with deep real-time combinations. Forty hours of sucking up experience points? There's nothing quite like its character development system. The story—the tale of a Valkyrie, a chooser of the slain for the Norse gods' army—sets up a massive cast of heroes to do battle with as they join the party, develop, and move on to Valhalla to make way for new characters.

*Valkyrie*'s storytelling is just as unique. It uses the anthology approach, in contrast to the epic sweep of most RPGs. Each chapter watches a different character die and live again, and they're no less moving for their unusual brevity. The English voices leave a lot to be desired, but you'll feel a lump in your throat at least once.

Its originality has made *Valkyrie* quite the rarity nowadays. If you can hunt down a copy and afford it when you find it, you'll probably look forward to a sequel by the end. **IC**



NOW... Why are we not playing a sequel right now? A beautiful, innovative RPG classic marred only by the English voice cast.

OPERATIC  
9/10

THEN... It looks great, it sounds great, but it's just a little bit hard to grasp.

QUIRKY  
8/10



# SAMBA DE AMIGO

## SHAKE YOUR MONKEY MAKER

DC | OCTOBER 2000

➔ Rhythm action has given us some ridiculous controllers. *Drum Mania*, *Guitar Freaks*, *Taiko no Tatsujin*, *Dance Dance Revolution*. Sometime this year, Nintendo's going to try and sell a conga-drum game by the name of *Donkey Konga*. But Sonic Team owns the wacky-peripheral title in perpetuity. There will never, ever be a music game as nutty as *Samba de Amigo*.

Aside from just looking goofy as hell, *Samba*'s a pretty neat piece of technology. Instead of plain old digital buttons, it uses infrared sensors to judge the altitude of the maracas you wave to the music. But clever technology doesn't make a game fun, and it certainly wasn't what made *Samba de Amigo* so much fun. *Samba* was...well, it was just fun.

Sonic Team has made some pretty out-there games before, but who'd have thought they had this in them? *Samba*'s visual style is a crazy collision between Japanese cute and Brazilian color, like carnival invaded Shibuya on a Saturday night. When the sombrero-clad monkey with the spastic grin and maracas permanently grafted on his outsized hands is not, in fact, the weirdest image in the game, you know you're playing something great.

The soundtrack's about as freaky, an eclectic mix of every genre you could imagine shaking a maraca to. Samba tunes, sure. Ricky Martin? That works. The Reel Big Fish playing ska'd-up A-Ha covers? It may sound weird, but "Take On Me" was probably the most entertaining tune you could play.

Sadly, *Samba de Amigo* (and the Japan-only *Samba de Amigo 2000*) was dead long before the Dreamcast might have taken the game with it. Before *Dance Dance Revolution* was a nation-sweeping phenomenon, most observers thought *Samba*'s limited American release was a horrible waste of money by Sega of America. And maybe it was, realistically speaking, but the gamers who grabbed those few hyperexpensive *Samba* controllers probably wouldn't give them up for the world today. **IC**

NOW... Still a landmark in crazy controller design, still an unbelievably good time. The arguable peak of Sonic Team's creativity.

BRILLIANT  
9/10

THEN... Who the hell decided to make a maraca game for Dreamcast? And can we have their children?

WILD  
9/10

➔ If *Samba de Amigo* looks a little bit familiar to this generation's gamers, that's because Sony Computer Entertainment Europe swiped its design wholesale for *EyeToy: Groove*. Even if Sonic Team never makes another music game, the design, it seems, will live on.







→ Nothing moved more smoothly than *Bust a Groove* in its time, and the character designs are still classics. Kitty-N is pure cartoon fetish appeal, and Hiro-kun moved a generation of game geeks to aspire to the coolness of the Natural Playboy.



# BUST A GROOVE

## ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE, A REAL GAME

PS1 | OCTOBER 1998

➔ *Bust a Groove* is six button presses away from losing any right to call itself a game. That's as challenging as this one ever gets—press six buttons on your PlayStation controller, end on the beat, and dance your way to glory. That it became the kind of cult hit it was (and maybe still is) for the few who can still find it) is a testament to the power of the entire package. Great music, great character design, and great animation—especially for 1998—can almost make up for the near-complete absence of any kind of gameplay.

Called *Bust a Move* in Japan but retitled to avoid confusion with the American version of *Puzzle Bobble*, this is easily the high point for developer Metro Graphics. Two

attempts at a sequel flopped, and God knows what the company is doing these days, but the original *Bust a Groove* came at just the right time to register a spike on the videogame radar. *Pac-Man* had more gameplay, but *Bust a Groove* happened to be one of the best early uses of motion capture in a videogame.

And it didn't use that motion capture for anything as mundane as, say, football. Metro hooked up its liquid-limbed actors to animate eight dance heroes, and the results were spectacular by 1998 standards. Between the hot dance moves and beautiful, interactive dance stages, it was one of the best graphical showcases on PlayStation.

An awesome soundtrack from

the Avex pop label provided the perfect accompaniment. Even now, the Japanese tunes are as catchy as you'll ever hear. But they set a standard that no other game in the series could hope to match. The American version featured second-rate vocals, while Enix abandoned Apex for the 1999 sequel. *Bust a Groove 2*'s tracks had no impact, and a third game on PS2—*Dance Summit 2001*—just added insult to injury. Metro could still make some killer animation, but it was nothing without the music. **1C**

NOW... After *Dance Dance Revolution*, this game starts to look just an eensy bit limited.

THEN... Metro had the animation, and Avex had the righteous pop touch.

EMPT  
5  
8

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# MORE

TIPS, CODES, ONLINE, AND MORE



## THIS MONTH IN MORE

### RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK 97

Don't break your game. Use our guide!

### TOP 10 TIPS: AL 100

Killer *Tenchu* codes, *Twin Snakes* unlockables, and so much more...

### CONNECT 102

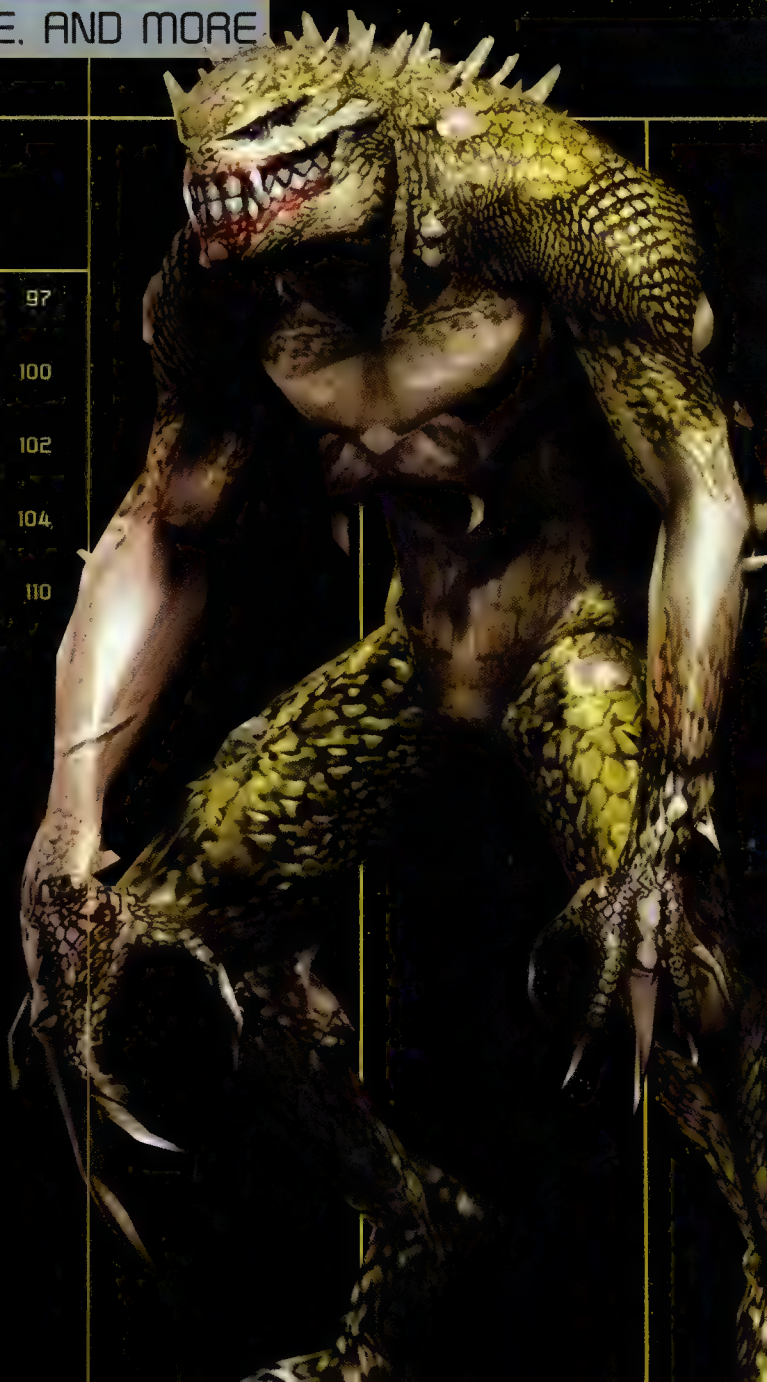
*Diablo II* news and a marriage proposal

### THE LIST 104

Turn-to-first listmania. This month, it's movie themed!

### GAME GEEZER 110

Game Geezer's back and looking at backsides





# RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

BREAK OUT OF YOUR LOSING WAYS!

➔ There are some sticky points in *Outbreak*, but the Decisions, Decisions scenario is the toughest of all. Don't kill yourself over it—we'll walk you through and show you how to get the major items you need, including the final major item (T-Blood), and how to mix the components to make Daylight, the T-Virus antitoxin. Note that this guide is for single-player mode only. One more thing: There's a lot of stuff to pick up in Decisions, Decisions. We recommend using Yoko as your character for her extra carrying capacity. You dig?

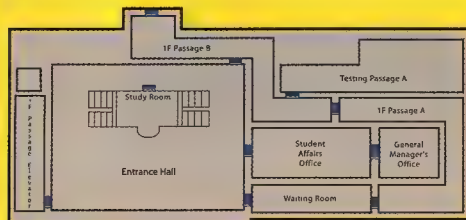
## RACCOON UNIVERSITY

Your main task in the main building of RU is opening doors. The college seems to have taken a few pages out of Umbrella's door-lock handbook, so you need some rather obscure items to get everything open.

➔ **TESTING PASSAGE A**  
You need the brass spectacles to open this slightly hidden door. The glasses can be found on one of the busts of past university presidents. Check the waiting room on the first floor or the drawing room upstairs. Once the brass spectacles are in your hands, head to the bust of the second president at the end of the 2F passage. Put the specs on the bust, and a door will be revealed. It leads to testing passage A, which is a shortcut back to 1F passage B.

Note: Open testing passage A when you grab the blue gem.

➔ **STUDY ROOM**  
You need two gems to place in the moose head behind the reception desk on the first floor to open the study room.



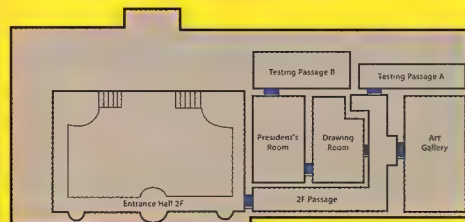
## UNIVERSITY 1F

**BLUE GEM:** Go to the president's room on the second floor. Examine the fireplace and pull one of the cords. Pull the red one on Normal difficulty, the blue on Easy. [Pull the opposite, and a zombie will pop out of the wall.] Skip over to the art gallery and grab the blue gem from the statue's hand.



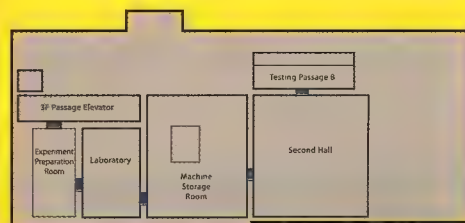
**RED GEM:** Dodge through the student affairs office to the general manager's room. There's a square picture on the wall near the door. Examine it and push the button underneath it. Then check the large clock on the back wall.

Set the glowing hands to 10:05 (on Normal difficulty) or 3:25 (on Easy). You'll get the gem from a cuckoo.



## UNIVERSITY 2F

➔ **ELEVATOR**  
In the 1F passage B hallway, you'll find part of a torn memo. It has the last three numbers of the elevator activation code on it. When you open the study room, you'll find a torn memo with the first number. Use that four-digit code to activate the elevator on the first floor.



## UNIVERSITY 3F

➔ **BACK COURT**  
When you've gone from B2F to the pier and then to the back court, you'll see a cut-scene. When it ends, find the card key on a dead soldier and use it to unlock the double doors nearby.

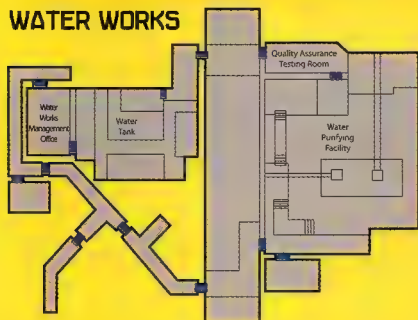
Note: Go to B2F and the water purifying facility first to find P-Base. It delays the generation of the froggy monsters and makes the going a little easier.

PS2



## WATER WORKS

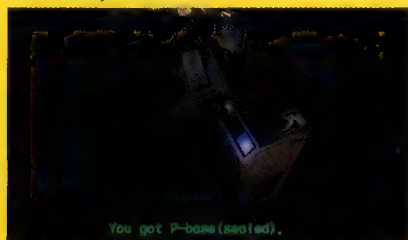
### WATER WORKS



To find P-Base, one of three ingredients you need to create a cure for the T-Virus, you need to travel through the water purifying facility.

### ➔ FAKE CONTAINER

In the water works management office, you'll find the P-Base system and a reagent case. Ignore the case—it isn't airtight, and the P-Base will deteriorate in it. Use the red tag key to open the door in the back of the office and enter the water tank. Once you're there, run across to the control board in the back and release the electronically locked door.



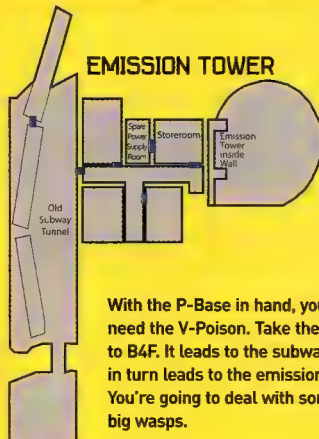
Now you have to run all the way back to the water purifying facility and through the quality assurance testing room to use the newly unlocked door. It leads to a different section of the water tank. Climb up to the control room, and you'll be able to get the reagent case (sealed).

Drop into the water tank from the busted rail and back to the management office. Use the case on the P-Base station, and you'll have the first piece of the antidote. Use the east waterway to get back to the B2F elevator.



Note: If you're playing single player, there's a chance that one of your helpers has already collected the V-Poison (or P-Base if you went for the V-Poison first). You may still want to go through the paces to collect items.

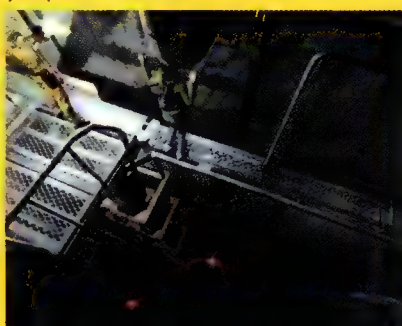
## THE EMISSION TOWER



With the P-Base in hand, you now need the V-Poison. Take the elevator to B4F. It leads to the subway, which in turn leads to the emission tower. You're going to deal with some really big wasps.

### ➔ POWER WOES

You need to restore power to the lift. Head through the T-shaped passage and you'll see a vent at floor level. Crawl through into the emission tower's inside wall. Sidestep along the narrow catwalk to the other platform. Wasps are around, so you may want to deal with them first or have your partner take shots at them.



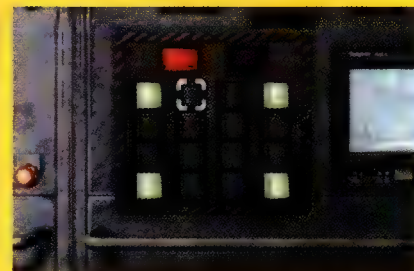
Note: The computer-controlled characters are usually better than you are at hitting the wasps. Let them take care of the buzzing jerks.

On the other platform, shimmy through another vent and you'll end up in the storeroom. You'll find another locked door. Next to it is a single locker cabinet that you can shove aside to reveal another vent on the ground. Crawl through to the spare power supply room.

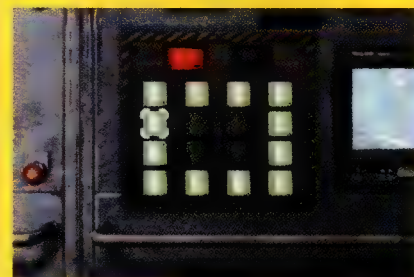
As if that wasn't enough, now you need to solve a puzzle to turn the power on.

Face the panel that has many buttons and examine it. You need to get all the buttons lit to restore power. On Normal difficulty, the four corner buttons are lit up. Press the four unlit buttons on the top and bottom rows of the panel, and you're golden.

For Easy difficulty, press the two lit buttons in the middle of the left side. Then press the button that's one button in from the corner on the top and bottom of the left side.



From the T-shaped passage, climb the ladder to the tower's lower level and make your way to the lift in the center of the tower. The ride is a waspfest, so either shoot them down or run and dodge around the elevator platform.



At the top, you'll find a honeycombed area. Within one of the nooks is the V-Poison. Pick it up, and you're two thirds away from getting the Daylight vaccine.

## THE BLOOD OF A MONSTER

By now, you've seen the cut-scene in which the T-Virus monster gets hit with a bloodsucking missile. When you've finished collecting the other elements, head back to the entrance hall of the university. That tough beast smashes his way in and begins chasing you. Now you need to find a way to wrestle that vial of T-Blood from the tall, tan, and terrifying Thanatos. It takes a lot of footwork.



Note: The T-Virus monster's name, Thanatos, means the personification of Death. That kind of spells out what he was created for, right? Just thought you might like to know.



## ➔ A SHOCKING DEVELOPMENT

Do NOT waste your time fighting the monster. He's impervious (that means "god mode" to you 133t gamers) to all your weapons. Dodge around the pillars in the entrance hall and duck through the door to the waiting room. Or you can call for help and have one of your cronies keep him busy as you run.

And keep running! The monster will follow, but you don't want to tangle with him yet. Bolt through the horseshoe-shaped 1F passage A. Take the corners tightly to avoid the monster's rushes (and watch out for zombie dog, too) and get to the next door.



Once you're in 1F passage B, pass under the exposed power cables and find the control panel at the nearby corner. Examine it, and you'll be asked if you want to push the button. Highlight "Yes," but wait. When the monster is directly under the wires, hit the button and watch the arc of electricity knock the goober down. Stoop to pick up the vial of T-Blood and get the hell out—the creature is stunned, but only for now.



Pop out to the entrance hall and scamper for the elevator as fast as your feetsies can take you. It's time to visit the third floor.

## THE LIGHT OF DAY

The antidote to the T-Virus is within your grasp. Which should be a relief, since your infection percentage is probably dangerously high at this point. Move into the laboratory and find the reagent incubator along one wall. Stand next to it and load in

the T-Blood, V-Poison, and P-Base. The machine will begin mixing the components.



Note: Some characters react differently in certain cut-scenes. In this case, Alyssa, the reporter, makes an announcement over the PA system while waiting for the machine to do its work.

And then the power shuts down.

Move further into the third floor, stocking up on weapons in the machine storage room, and you'll come across a mysterious cut-scene in the second hall. After that, you will be in mortal peril of being blown up. Use the computers on the desk of the second hall to restart the reagent incubator and unlock all the doors (check the computers at either end of the desk to perform these actions).

Run back to the incubator and grab the Daylight antitoxin. Use it and you'll be free of the T-Virus. Hang out and give samples of Daylight to every surviving member of your team. Grab an extra one



for good luck and go back to the second hall.

There's a door that looks like a wall-mounted machine near the white board. Exit through it and make your way to the back court to let the timer run down to zero. After that, you're on your own.



Let's just say that the brainteasers are over and the slugfest is about to begin. One last word of advice: You will find the final fights of this level to be infinitely easier if you have one or more well-armed companions with you. Try to keep them alive as you play. **LE**



PS2





# A.I.

HIS CODES ARE REAL. BUT HE IS NOT



Our A.I. bot churned out these codes with the help of our good friends at Prima Games. Hey, even robots need some help now and then.

## 01 MVP BASEBALL 2004 PS2/XBOX

➔ Earn at least 4,500 MVP points and you can knock one out of the park with these heavy hitters and play these ballparks from yesteryear.



Babe Ruth	5,000 MVP points	Roy Campanella	4,500 MVP points
Bob Gibson	4,500 MVP points	Satchel Paige	4,500 MVP points
Cy Young	4,500 MVP points	Sparky Anderson	4,500 MVP points
Forbes Field	5,000 MVP points	The Polo Grounds	5,000 MVP points
Honus Wagner	4,500 MVP points	Tommy Lasorda	4,500 MVP points
Jackie Robinson	5,000 MVP points	Ty Cobb	5,000 MVP points
Lou Gehrig	4,500 MVP points	Walter Johnson	4,500 MVP points
Nolan Ryan	4,500 MVP points	Willie McCovey	4,500 MVP points
Reggie Jackson	4,500 MVP points	Yogi Berra	4,500 MVP points

## 02 TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS XB

➔ Like your ninja games without a demon hunter sporting a giant ax and even bigger fun bags? Then put down *Ninja Gaiden* and pick up *Tenchu*; this game's suddenly gotten a whole lot easier thanks to these button-press cheats.

### Restore health

During a mission, pause and press Up, Down, Up, Down, X, X, X.

### All items

At the Item Selection screen, hold L and R and then press Up, Down, Up, Down, X, X, X, Left, Right, Left, Right, X, X, X.

### Fill the Kuji meter

During a mission, pause, hold L and R, and then press Left, Left, Left, Right, X.

### All characters

At the Start screen, hold the White and Black buttons and press Up, Right, Left, Down. Release the White and Black buttons and press L, R.

### Increase offensive power

During a mission, pause, hold R and the White button, and press Up, Down, Up, Down. Release R and White and press X, X, X.

### Bonus mission

At the Title screen, press White, Up, Black, Down, L, Right, R, Left.

### All missions

At the Mission Select screen, press White, White, L, R, Right, X, left click, right click.

### All layouts

At the Mission Select screen, press right click, left click, L, R, White, Black.

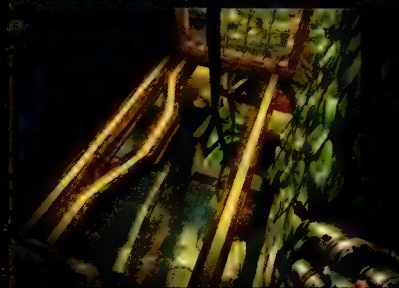


## 03 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 PC

➔ Are those red team bots always creating Leviathans? Gunning your pullet down with grenades? Even the score by cheating, but if you try these out during the single-player game, the three unlockable characters won't be released.

To enable cheats, press the Tilde key and type "EnableCheats" (case sensitive), then enter any of these codes.

God mode	god
All weapons	allweapons
Full ammo for every weapon	allammo
Ghost mode	ghost
Look, I can fly	fly
Turn off fly	walk
Teleport to random spot	teleport
All weapons, ammo, and adrenaline	loaded



## 04 JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING PS2/XBOX

➔ We reveal more secrets than Roger Moore has toupees. This issue: best gold-rating unlockables!

Helicopter upgrade	6 gold	Production stills 11	19 gold
Serena	8 gold	Katya	20 gold
Tank upgrade	10 gold	Triumph upgrade	
Underworld	11 gold	Production stills 12	21 gold
Cayenne upgrade	12 gold	Production stills 13	22 gold
Mya	14 gold	Production stills 14	23 gold
Vanquish upgrade	15 gold	Nanotank upgrade	24 gold
Miss Nagai	17 gold	Production stills 15	25 gold
Production stills 10	18 gold	Gallery	27 gold





## 05 NINJA GAIDEN 3D

➔ Finished the game yet? Weeping in the fetal position about the insane difficulty? It's about to get even more maddening: Check out these unlockables, and good luck opening them!

**Blue Ninja Outfit**

At the Main menu, highlight New Game, hold both trigger buttons, and press A.

**Armlet of Benediction**

Collect 15 scarabs.

**Dabilahro**

Collect 20 scarabs.

**Armlet of Fortune**

Collect 30 scarabs.

**Armlet of Tranquility**

Collect 40 scarabs.

**Original Ninja Gaiden**

Collect 50 scarabs.

**Ninja Gaiden 2**

Once you unlock the original *Ninja Gaiden*, shoot the clock tower near Muramasa's shop in Tairon.

**Ninja Gaiden 3**

In the ceremonial room in the aqueducts, jump up the wall where you found the golden scarab.

**Dark Dragon Blade**

Complete the game, then visit Muramasa's shop in Chapter 13.

**Evil Ryu**

Complete the game on Very Hard difficulty.

## 08 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES GC

➔ Although we've yet to find the Moai head Easter egg from the original game, there are more than enough unlockables to locate in your graphically polished stealth exploits with Solid "Dave" Snake. Here are some of the best:

**Alternate ending theme**

Complete the game three times.

**Bandanna**

Complete the game with Meryl.

**Boss survival mode**

Complete the game.

**Crimson ninja**

Complete the game twice.

**Camera**

Find the camera and complete the game.

**Stealth suit**

Complete the game with Otacon.

**Tuxedo**

Complete the game twice.

**Sneaking suit Meryl**

Complete the game twice.

**Alex from *Eternal Darkness***

Lay any book on the ground and look at the cover.

**Replenish health during the ninja fight**

While fighting ninja, go into first-person mode and shoot Mario in the head. You will hear a TUP noise and you'll get some life back.



## 06 MAFIA PS2/XB

➔ Here's an offer you can't refuse: ripping the fabric of time and tearing through 1930s streets in a monster truck. There are cities, cars, and a race mode to unlock, too.

**Monster truck**

Take first place in all of the races in racing championship mode.

**Time of day**

Progress through story mode to unlock a day/night option for free ride mode.

**City selection**

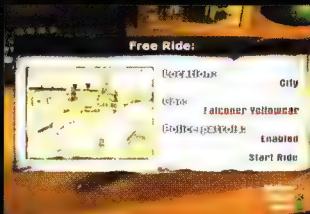
Progress through story mode to unlock more areas for free ride mode.

**Race mode**

Complete all the missions in story mode.

**Car selection**

Learn to break into cars during missions. Doing so will allow you to use them in free ride mode.



## 09 THE SUFFERING PS2/XB

➔ Outrageous expletives? Heaps of torn body parts? Strange mutants with "flesh bagpipes" protruding out of them? This must be a Midway game. Suffer no more by using these Bizarro World game secrets.

**Prelude level**

Complete the game.

**Alternate title sequence**

Complete the game.

**Director commentary**

In the prelude level, wait for a crow to land next to the three inmates, then stand on top of the crow.

**Monster archives**

Use monster transformation for the majority of the game and beat the game.

**Torque archives**

Make bad decisions and beat the game.

**Torque's family archives**

Make good decisions and beat the game.



## 07 BREAKDOWN XB

➔ We've got one plan for Derrick Cole—punch your way through the entire game to open up a quartet of unlockables.

**Gallery**

Complete the game.

**Music player**

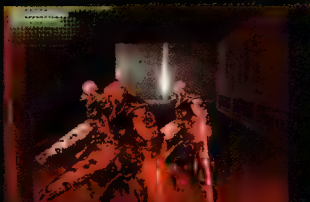
Complete the game.

**Trailer**

Complete the game.

**Extreme mode**

Complete the game.



## 10 FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES GC

➔ Check your moogles for stamps, and when you've filled up, return to a nest to play a secret minigame using your GBA screens.

**Minigame:**

Simply collect matching mog stamps.



XB

PS

PS2

GBA

GC



# CONNECT

GMR GOES DEEP INTO DIABLO'S UNDERGROUND LAIR, AND MAKES A PROPOSAL

ONLINE GAMING

## ROUND 1, FIGHT!

➔ I finally broke down and purchased an Xbox recently. There were a few reasons for this, but the biggest one was *Capcom vs. SNK 2*. Yeah, yeah, I know—it was released a while ago, but I've really been addicted to it lately on my PS2. And you see, the Xbox version has something the PS2 version doesn't: online play.

Having the option to challenge other players online adds a whole new layer to this game. Beating the computer over and over gets old quickly, and if you've got friends that are anything like mine, the competitive well runs dry pretty fast, too. Playing online is like having a thriving arcade in your living room, except without the quarters. Online support is simply a wonderful thing when it comes to fighting games—in fact, how anyone could consider it anything less than a required feature at this point is beyond me.

Honestly—what other good fighting games out there feature online play? *Soul Calibur II*? *Tekken 4*? *Guilty Gear X2*? No, no, and no. Heck, even the recently released Xbox port of *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* has no sign of Xbox Live support.

How is it that this is such a neglected feature in a genre that absolutely screams for it? Developers, do us all a favor and take a note from *Capcom vs. SNK 2*—put your fighting games online. And yes, I'm looking at you, Namco. **IC**

Ryan Scott is the disc editor of *Computer Gaming World*.

## IN THE DEVIL'S NEST

### DIABLO II: LIFE AFTER VERSION 1.10

NEWS

It's been four hellacious years since Blizzard released its stupendously addictive devil-hunting dungeon crawler, *Diablo II*. In that time, we've seen a full-fledged expansion pack and tons of patch upgrades, but none more significant than the most recent, version 1.10. GMR recently had an amusing conversation with Blizzard's Chris "Skullder" Arretche about the changes and what they mean to you.

➔ GMR: Why is my hiring still a little dense when it comes to pathfinding, like in the Maggots Den or Arcane Sanctuary?

CA: Most heroes of Sanctuary start their adventures by training as hirelings, learning the tricks of the trade from the seasoned pros they follow. During their long journey into the unknown, heroes often have to coax their students into accompanying them. Sadly, most lessons don't come easily, and the hardest lesson to master is conquering fear!

GMR: It seems like the Durance of Hate is now 10 times as large as before, and the skull kids are about three times as fast and as numerous. Give us a tip on how to survive these rotten bastards.

CA: Mephisto relishes torturing heroes by distorting their perceptions. As for the bone fetishes, or "skull kids," remember that they do a lot of melee damage. Try to kill them at a distance or pick them off one by one. Don't let them gang up on you, and never let 'em see you sweat! Also, be aware that they explode when killed, so they tend to do a ton of damage to anyone who is nearby when they die....

GMR: I don't use a map hack, so why is everything always in the last place I look?

CA: First, let me just congratulate you on not using a map hack. It takes a real man (or woman) to play legit and not wuss out when things get tough. Having said that, part of the beauty of the

situation you're referring to is that players can relate this to real-world situations like "Now where did I put my car keys?"

GMR: What does it mean when we see the message "2,756 Stones of Jordan sold to merchants"? What's the dealy, yo?

CA: That is in fact due to the generosity of your fellow players offering up their Stones of Jordan to unleash the terror known as Über Diablo. He apparently has a SOJ "problem," and he's got to have them all! No one really knows how many SOJs it will take to get him to show, but we hear he tends to leave behind a pretty good substitute item when he dies....

GMR: Have you seen a resurgence in the amount of people playing *Diablo II* since

the patch was released? And what are the most significant balance additions that will be tangible to the less observant player?

CA: Big-time resurgence! The release of the 1.10 patch was meant to show our appreciation to all the fans for their long-term support, as well as offer something cool to new and returning players. It's really gratifying to know so many people are having fun playing! Everyone should be sure to check out the new synergy system on Player Skills, the random monsters of act 5, and the tons of cool new items. Everyone should also definitely check out the Arreat Summit ([www.battle.net/diablo2exp/1](http://www.battle.net/diablo2exp/1) for a complete list of all the changes we've made). *Diablo II* really has something for everybody. **IC**



"And stay down!"

➔ GMR's resident Baal-killing paladin, Buffy, gets medieval on a pile of maulers. Just goes to show what a good set of thorns will do for ya.

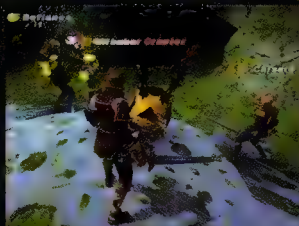


# MY LIFE IN VANA'DIEL

A MONTHLY TRAVELOGUE OF ONE EDITOR'S TIME IN FINAL FANTASY XI



→ At level 38 red mages gain the ability to **Raise** the fallen. Ironically, Wraeth (right) was the first player Milky had to raise. Top right, Kaiseran stares down a twin white mage, before helping Milky achieve Rank 4.



Check back next month to see if Wraeth says yes!

→ You could say that a **red mage** isn't truly a red mage until he hits level 41. This is when all the skills intrinsic to being a red mage come to fruition. While one major step comes at level 38 (acquiring the ability to cast **Raise** on KO'd players) and another at level 40 with **Convert**, which allows red mages to swap their current HP with their MP, it's not until level 41 that red mages become the life of the party, gaining the unique ability to cast **Refresh** on both themselves and others.

Refresh regenerates MP without requiring the player to crouch and rest, thereby eliminating downtime for parties, as white mages can continue healing the warriors, and black mages can continue casting offensive magic on enemies. Less downtime equals faster battles, which equals more experience points and higher levels. Any successful high-level party has a red mage in its ranks, and ideally a bard as well.

Well, I am now officially a candidate for life of the party as I catapulted past the 41 mark over a furious weeklong campaign in the **Crawler's Nest** and **Gustav Tunnel** with a blend of awesome American (Purger, Rathslly, Alderon) and Japanese (Kimkaphwan, Hqiqoo,

and Deedlid, among the many) players. I also gained the advanced jobs of **ranger**, **bard**, and **beastmaster**, while bringing my ranger up to level 10 (many thanks to **Damaramu** for hooking me up with some nice ranger-specific bows—especially that Power Bow +1!).

When I wasn't leveling my red mage, Wraeth and I were leveling up our **dragoons** in the **Valkurm Dunes**. I also spent a great deal of time running around assembling a full set of **race-specific equipment**, a laborious quest that takes you to dangerous dungeons all over Vana'Diel to gain this valuable midlevel gear. Another thing players start collecting after level 40 is their **artifact gear**. These job-specific items can be obtained only every handful of levels, and my first one was a sword called a **Fencing Degen** that, with the help of a level 70-plus dragoon named **Solcloud**, was easily obtained.

Again, none of this would have been possible without my good luck charm, **Wraeth**. Ever present and always willing to share in my adventures, I can think of no one I'd rather embark on **FFXI's** newly added wedding quest with. So, how 'bout it, Wraeth? Will you...marry me? **James Mielke**

→ Editor's note: Kids, the above in-game marriage proposal is a game-context simulation performed by trained stunt-gamers. Don't try this at home. Or do. It's part of the game.

## MILKMAN



## RED MAGE/DRAGOON

WRAETH'S LEVEL 48

WRAETH'S JOB 20

WRAETH'S WEAPON WINDURST

WRAETH'S HUME

WRAETH'S SIREN

WRAETH'S ROUNDABOUTS



## THE LIST

GMR'S EXHAUSTIVE GUIDE TO THE ONLY GAMES THAT MATTER

BUYERS' GUIDE

## → PS2 TOP 100 WHAT DOES YOUR HEART TELL YOU?

PS2

<b>.hack//Mutation</b>	Bandai	We've exhausted our supply of "something within a something" jokes, so just know that the series starts to pick up in this sequel.	8
<b>Amplitude</b>	Sony	A whole slew of new artists who, naturally, bring along brand-new tunes for your button-pressing pleasure.	8
<b>Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance</b>	Interplay	A beautiful-looking <i>Dungeons &amp; Dragons</i> -based hack-n-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
<b>Beyond Good &amp; Evil</b>	Ubisoft	<i>Rayman</i> creator Michel Ancel has done it again: <i>BG&amp;E</i> is a spectacular adventure.	9
<b>Bombastic</b>	Capcom	Kudos to Capcom for bringing over the excellent <i>Devil Dice</i> series. Roll those dice, daddy needs a new pair of DualShocks.	8
<b>Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter</b>	Capcom	An RPG that forces you to die and start over multiple times? It sounds ridiculous, but it actually works.	8
<b>Burnout 2: Point of Impact</b>	Acclaim	An aggressive driving simulator that defies the rules of physics. Includes a dedicated crash mode for aspiring demolition-derby stars.	8
<b>Capcom vs. SNK 2</b>	Capcom	Take the best elements of <i>Street Fighter</i> and <i>King of Fighters</i> , and you'll have the best thing going in the world of 2D combat.	8
<b>Castlevania: Lament of Innocence</b>	Konami	The <i>Castlevania</i> franchise goes 3D (again!). It's different from what we're used to, but it's still good.	8
<b>Champions of Norrath</b>	Sony Online	A hefty, highly replayable top-down action-RPG that outclasses <i>Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II</i> .	8
<b>Chaos Legion</b>	Capcom	Storm through 15 levels of nonstop action, commanding various squads of bodyguards. It's like <i>Devil May Cry</i> , only not so antisocial.	8
<b>Colin McRae Rally 3</b>	Codemasters	A superb rally racer with superrealistic properties—right down to the extended time you spend sitting in the Ford Focus.	8
<b>Contra: Shattered Soldier</b>	Konami	After numerous shoddy attempts to bring the classic <i>Contra</i> game play to a next-gen system, Konami finally gets it right.	9
<b>Dance Dance Revolution: DDRMax</b>	Konami	Before, if you wanted to play <i>DDR</i> , you had to subject yourself to Joe and Jane Public. Now you can embarrass yourself at home.	8
<b>Dark Cloud 2</b>	Sony	Improves upon the first one in every way imaginable. Building and upgrading weapons to your liking is a blast.	9
<b>Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2</b>	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, <i>XXX</i> was based on the well-mannered Dave Mirra and actually focused on biking.	8
<b>Devil May Cry</b>	Capcom	Did you know <i>Devil May Cry</i> was going to be <i>Resident Evil 4</i> before it was spun off as its own series? Oh, you did? Never mind, then.	9
<b>Disgaea: Hour of Darkness</b>	Atlus	Aside from being a fantastically deep strategy game, <i>Disgaea</i> is also the funniest strategy-RPG we've ever played.	8
<b>Dynasty Warriors 3</b>	Koei	Melee combat set in ancient China. Enemies number in the hundreds along branching story paths.	8
<b>Escape From Monkey Island</b>	LucasArts	LucasArts has a fine tradition of putting out excellent graphical adventure games, and this latest charmer is no exception.	9
<b>ESPN NBA Basketball</b>	Sega	It's the best-looking basketball game this year, and it's marginally the best-playing one, too.	8
<b>ESPN NFL Football</b>	Sega	The new first-person mode is an interesting addition to a solid game of football, but it's still not enough to top <i>Madden</i> .	8
<b>ESPN NHL Hockey</b>	Sega	The game formerly known as <i>NHL2K1(x)</i> , where (x) is the last digit of the year we're in. Oh yeah, it's still really good.	8
<b>EyeToy: Groove</b>	Sony	The groove is in the heart, but a lot of it is in your arms, too. Watch yourself onscreen—yes, you really do look ridiculous.	8
<b>Fatal Frame 2</b>	Tecmo	One of the downright creepiest ghost stories you'll ever experience. It also doubles as a fun game!	8
<b>Fight Night 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Pure pugilistic pleasure—terrifyingly realistic with innovative controls. Hit me, baby.	9
<b>Final Fantasy X</b>	Square EA	PS2's first <i>Final Fantasy</i> does away with the traditional overworld but introduces full voice acting. Artistically beautiful, as always.	9
<b>Final Fantasy X-2</b>	Square EA	Yuna and company put a fresh set of clothes on <i>Final Fantasy X</i> 's gameplay. Hey, ladies!	9
<b>Final Fantasy XI</b>	Sony	This may indeed be our final fantasy—we may spend the rest of our lives here. The social element is addictive, to the extreme.	9
<b>Gran Turismo 3 A-spec</b>	Sony	Core gameplay is unchanged, but the graphics get a complete overhaul, which makes <i>GT3</i> the best-playing/looking sim on the market.	10
<b>Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack</b>	Rockstar Games	Containing both <i>Grand Theft Auto III</i> and <i>Grand Theft Auto: Vice City</i> , this is the value of the year. Now go get your mob on.	10
<b>Guilty Gear XX</b>	Sammy	Tired of waiting for <i>Street Fighter 4</i> ? This one should more than compensate. Great visuals, great control, and great extras.	8
<b>Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup</b>	Electronic Arts	J.K. Rowling's fantasy sport is surprisingly playable in videogame form. We wonder what Sega's <i>ESPN Quidditch</i> would be like....	8
<b>Hitman 2: Silent Assassin</b>	Eidos	Most of the problems with the original <i>Hitman</i> have been fixed, making this one of the more rewarding action games on PS2.	9
<b>Hot Shots Golf 3</b>	Sony	Some golf games need something extra to attract gamers. How about arcade-style control, annoying taunts, and multiplayer modes?	9
<b>Ico</b>	Sony	An underappreciated work of art with challenging puzzles, fantastic lighting, and engrossing character relationships.	9
<b>Jak II</b>	Sony	<i>Jak II</i> tries to be everything to all gamers, and it ends up getting a lot of it right, but it's still derivative.	8
<b>James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing</b>	Electronic Arts	Not a cheap cash-in, but not quite <i>GoldenEye</i> .	8
<b>Karaoke Revolution</b>	Konami	Can't carry a tune? Seriously, this game is still for you. Bring on the append discs!	8
<b>kill.switch</b>	Namco	Namco's action-shooter uses the concept of cover to create battles with intensity. Not that battles usually aren't intense, mind you....	8
<b>Kingdom Hearts</b>	Square EA	When the amazing, talented artists from Square join forces with the amazing, talented artists from Disney, good things happen.	8
<b>The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King</b>	Electronic Arts	The series concludes with EA's best <i>LOTR</i> effort, an improvement on <i>The Two Towers</i> that looks fantastic.	9
<b>The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers</b>	Electronic Arts	Anything bearing the valuable <i>Lord of the Rings</i> license will sell well. Happily, there's more to this beat-em-up than just the name.	8
<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive owner mode.	9
<b>The Mark of Kri</b>	Sony	A slick action game with innovative controls: Each button is assigned to a different enemy, allowing for combat with multiple targets.	8
<b>Maximo: Ghosts to Glory</b>	Capcom	It's the spiritual successor to the classic <i>Ghosts 'n' Goblins</i> , complete with heart boxers and insane difficulty.	8
<b>Maximo vs. Army of Zin</b>	Capcom	Improves upon the original <i>Maximo</i> in every conceivable way: better graphics, better camera, and a better pace.	8
<b>MDK 2: Armageddon</b>	Interplay	Much improved over the original Dreamcast incarnation, <i>MDK 2: Armageddon</i> is one of the better recent action games.	8
<b>Medal of Honor: Frontline</b>	Electronic Arts	A strong single-player campaign paves the way through the beaches of Normandy and the heart of France. Great audio.	8
<b>Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance</b>	Konami	There's a lot in this update: 350 VR missions, 150 alternate missions, five Snake Tales, and one skateboard. Yes, a skateboard.	9



<b>MotoGP 3</b>	Namco	After three attempts, Namco got it right...sort of. The realism is astounding, as long as you ignore the giant Mr. Driller.	8
<b>MVP Baseball 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Includes every AA and AAA farm club, a unique pitching meter, and looks great to boot. A home run! Heh.	9
<b>NASCAR Thunder 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	It's a lot like last year's version of <i>Thunder</i> , only better. Obviously for NASCAR fans.	8
<b>NBA Live 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Should you upgrade to the latest version of <i>Live</i> ? As new announcer Marv Albert would say, "YES!"	8
<b>NBA Street Vol. 2</b>	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, <i>Vol. 2</i> takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
<b>NCAA Football 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	EA took the excellent <i>NCAA 2003</i> , added some new blocking and pass-defense enhancements, and produced another winner.	9
<b>Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2</b>	Electronic Arts	Strangely, the game's best version is on the least-powerful hardware. Running from cops has never been this fun or consequence free.	9
<b>Need for Speed Underground</b>	Electronic Arts	All the thrills of illegal street racing without having to run from the cops. Unless you steal your copy.	9
<b>NHL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
<b>NHL Hitz Pro</b>	Midway	It's hardly realistic, but it's not supposed to be. It's also the closest we'll ever get to a new <i>Ice Hockey</i> or <i>Blades of Steel</i> .	8
<b>NFL Street</b>	Electronic Arts	It's like football, except more fun.	8
<b>Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny</b>	Capcom	The effort put forth in defeating Nobunaga in <i>Onimusha</i> has gone to waste, as he's risen from the dead to appear in the sequel.	8
<b>Onimusha: Warlords</b>	Capcom	Survival-horror with a taste for feudal Japan, gorgeous artistic design, and a whole lot more action than its <i>Resident Evil</i> kin.	8
<b>Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time</b>	Ubisoft	This is the right way to bring back a classic...if only the camera were more manageable.	8
<b>Ratchet &amp; Clank: Going Commando</b>	Sony	<i>Going Commando</i> borrows ingredients from other genres and makes a giant casserole of awesome.	9
<b>Rayman 2: Revolution</b>	Ubisoft	One of the best 3D platformers available, the <i>Rayman</i> franchise doesn't get the attention it deserves.	9
<b>Resident Evil Code: Veronica X</b>	Capcom	More of a true sequel than <i>Resident Evil 3</i> , <i>Veronica's</i> Dreamcast debut meant many fans missed out. Problem solved!	8
<b>Rez</b>	Sega	A fairly standard shooter dressed as a visual and aural masterpiece. Sadly unappreciated by the vast majority of the gaming world.	8
<b>R-Type Final</b>	Eidos	<i>R-Type</i> does its swan song with all the joyful intensity you could ask for.	9
<b>Rygar: The Legendary Adventure</b>	Tecmo	This Greek-mythology-based action game is an update of the arcade and NES classic in name only. Fun combat and great music.	9
<b>Sega Sports Tennis</b>	Sega	Arcade-style tennis perfection when it launched for Dreamcast. It's holding up just as well on PS2.	8
<b>Silent Hill 3</b>	Konami	The third chapter of this grisly horror show once again has you running down dark hallways with a flashlight.	8
<b>The Simpsons: Hit &amp; Run</b>	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good <i>Simpsons</i> game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
<b>The Sims: Bustin' Out</b>	Electronic Arts	All the familiar goodness of <i>The Sims</i> , but now with branching career paths that will take you forever to finish.	9
<b>Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus</b>	Sony	A solid platformer with a unique aesthetic and animations. Lacks a little in the challenge department; it's a little on the short side, too.	8
<b>SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs</b>	Sony	Possibly the the best reason to own a PS2 Network Adaptor. The team-based military tactics work better online than off.	9
<b>SOCOM II</b>	Sony	Everything you loved about the first <i>SOCOM</i> , now with less of everything you didn't like so much.	9
<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as <i>VF4: Evolution's</i> .	9
<b>Space Channel 5: Special Edition</b>	Age-tec	Shake your groove thing, shake your groove thing, yeah yeah! Includes the original <i>Space Channel 5</i> and its sequel.	8
<b>SSX 3</b>	Electronic Arts	EA ditches individual courses in favor of one giant mountain and ends up making the best <i>SSX</i> yet.	9
<b>Sub Rebellion</b>	Metro3D	Customizable submarines rule the waters of the future; <i>Sub Rebellion</i> is an action game that's short on graphics but very entertaining.	8
<b>Tekken Tag Tournament</b>	Namco	Essentially <i>Tekken 3</i> with enhanced graphics and tag teaming. Which isn't bad, considering <i>Tekken 3</i> is a great game to begin with.	8
<b>Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven</b>	Activision	<i>Tenchu</i> sneaked onto the list without us noticing. We were drunk on sake and telling tales of heroism, so that might be why.	8
<b>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Tiger Woods made golf cool (sort of). <i>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</i> makes golf games cool (sort of).	9
<b>TimeSplitters 2</b>	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options, including maps, weapons, and game modes, too.	9
<b>Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero</b>	Crave	Cruise Tokyo's highways in search of less-than-legal street-racing action. Despite some visual issues, it's definitely worth checking out.	8
<b>Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3</b>	Ubisoft	This strategy-shooter's port to PS2 brings simpler floor plans, a less-revealing radar, and automatic saves. And it's still good.	9
<b>Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell</b>	Ubisoft	As expected, the PS2 port of the Xbox original takes a graphical hit. Doesn't mean it's not still a great game, though.	9
<b>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4</b>	Activision	Neversoft dropped the two-minute time limit in career mode and added an array of objectives. Level design is a step up from <i>THPS3's</i> .	9
<b>Tony Hawk's Underground</b>	Activision	The depth and versatility of <i>THUG's</i> customizable gameplay make it the best <i>Hawk</i> yet.	10
<b>Twisted Metal: Black</b>	Sony	With the franchise safely out of the hands of 989 Studios, <i>Twisted Metal</i> makes a welcome return to its former gruesome glory.	9
<b>Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution</b>	Sega	The greatest 3D fighter ever created, and it's only a measly \$20. Mow the lawn twice, and it's yours.	10
<b>Wakeboarding Unleashed</b>	Activision	A surprisingly stellar extreme-sports title that manages to make the <i>Tony Hawk</i> formula work on water. Watch out for the gators.	9
<b>War of the Monsters</b>	Sony	King Kong's agent wanted a cool \$20 mil. for this fun beat-em-up, but Sony balked and went with the less-recognizable <i>Conqar</i> .	9
<b>Wild Arms 3</b>	Sony	A grand adventure with a Wild West theme, endearing characters, great music, and a refreshingly uncomplicated battle system.	8
<b>Winning Eleven 7</b>	Konami	Enough tweaks to warrant a purchase, even if you own the last <i>Winning Eleven</i> .	9
<b>Wipeout Fusion</b>	Bam	The Designer's Republic touch may be missing, but the series' oft-imitated, never-surpassed style of racing remains intact.	8
<b>WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain</b>	THQ	Much better than the previous <i>SmackDown!</i> , <i>HCTP</i> improves the previously flawed grappling system.	8
<b>Xenosaga</b>	Namco	A massive RPG with an epic story and length. Namco's now in charge of the <i>Xeno</i> series, and this is the first of many planned chapters.	9
<b>Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner</b>	Konami	Better enemies, better pacing, better music, better stages, and better weapons. What we're trying to say is, <i>ZOE2</i> is better than the first.	8

## [BUY!]

THE LORD OF THE RINGS:  
THE RETURN OF THE KING

➔ It's our movie-themed Buy/Avoid! We'd be remiss not to mention one of the finest movie-based games yet made. *The Return of the King* captures the majesty of the movie, and its two-player gameplay gives it a one-up on *The Two Towers*.



## [AVOID!]

CROUCHING TIGER,  
HIDDEN DRAGON

➔ The beautiful, fluid fighting of the 2000 movie is converted into stilted, robotic combat with copious jumping puzzles and a camera that refuses to point in the direction you need it to.





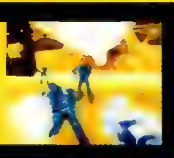
# PC TOP 50 NOT ALL TREASURE IS SILVER AND GOLD, MATE

<b>Aliens vs. Predator 2</b>	Sierra	Three completely different first-person shooters combined into one dark and terrifying gaming experience.	9
<b>Armed &amp; Dangerous</b>	LucasArts	Tea-drinking robots and guns that fire sharks. What else could you possibly ask for?	9
<b>Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn</b>	Interplay	The rare occasion when the sequel to a classic goes above and beyond its predecessor. Can't wait for III.	9
<b>Battlefield 1942</b>	Electronic Arts	Multiplayer shooter set in WWII that lets you jump in and out of vehicles (even planes!) while battling dozens of your friends.	9
<b>Battlefield Vietnam</b>	Electronic Arts	Who wouldn't want to revisit those halcyon days of the Vietnam War? Seriously, though, this game brilliantly revamps 1942.	9
<b>Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon</b>	Revolution Games	If you like adventure games that offer challenging puzzles and great visuals, then cozy up to <i>The Sleeping Dragon</i> .	9
<b>Civilization III</b>	Infogrames	Sid Meier's classic just keeps rolling along, getting bigger and more complex while somehow managing to remain just as addictive.	10
<b>Deus Ex: Invisible War</b>	Eidos	<i>Invisible War</i> , much like the first <i>Deus Ex</i> , is a game whose better moments far outweigh its lesser ones.	9
<b>Diablo II: Lords of Destruction</b>	Blizzard	The sequel to the ultimate dungeon-crawling clickfest should please anyone who wasted their teens playing the first game.	8
<b>Dungeon Siege</b>	Microsoft	Hack-n-slash doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, it can even be in beautiful 3D with no loading time between levels.	8
<b>The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind</b>	Bethesda	The definitive open-ended RPG epic. Sort of like <i>GTA3</i> , but with magic, elves, and all that <i>D&amp;D</i> flavor.	9
<b>EverQuest</b>	Sony Online	The MMORPG that's so addictive, it makes crack seem like Sanka. Play this game at your own risk.	9
<b>EverQuest: The Scars of Velious</b>	Sony Online	The expansion pack to <i>Evercrack</i> opens up new worlds, new characters, and tigers with boobies (finally!).	9
<b>Fallout Tactics</b>	Interplay	Squad-based tactical strategy game (set in the same universe as the classic <i>Fallout</i> RPG) that sets a new standard.	9
<b>Final Fantasy XI</b>	Square Enix	If you possess the patience (and the money for the monthly fee), <i>FFXI</i> is a rewarding MMO experience.	8
<b>Freedom Force</b>	Electronic Arts	Clever use of strategy and RPG elements helps make this witty comic-book-superhero-themed game one of the best.	10
<b>Freelancer</b>	Microsoft	It's not as simtastic as some might expect a PC space shooter to be, but that's part of its charm. Random missions keep the fun going.	8
<b>Ghost Recon: Island Thunder</b>	Ubisoft	This top-notch mission pack makes a decent modern-combat simulation into an outstanding one.	8
<b>Giants: Citizen Kabuto</b>	Interplay	A shooter/strategy hybrid full of weird British humor, unique and beautiful 3D graphics, and naked-lady sea monsters.	9
<b>Grand Prix 4</b>	Infogrames	It's a tough choice for Formula One fans; <i>GP4</i> and <i>F1 2002</i> are both worthy of your hard-earned dollars.	9
<b>Grand Theft Auto III</b>	Rockstar Games	The poster child for all that's wrong in gaming is chock-full of all that's fun in gaming. And you get to import your own MP3s.	10
<b>Grand Theft Auto: Vice City</b>	Rockstar Games	The PC version of the hit game sports a higher resolution, custom MP3 soundtracks, and mouse-look for easier killin'.	10
<b>Hitman 2: Silent Assassin</b>	Eidos	An almost perfect blend of action and stealth, it's a humongous improvement over the first game.	9
<b>IL-2 Sturmovik</b>	Ubisoft	Amazingly realistic WWII flight sim covering a region seldom visited in computer games: the Eastern Front.	9
<b>Kohan: Ahriman's Gift</b>	Strategy First	Surprisingly accessible fantasy-themed real-time strategy game that's as much fun in single player as it is against other mages online.	9
<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive owner mode.	9
<b>Max Payne</b>	G.O.D.	Despite some corny writing, this überhip noir videogame feels like a movie but plays like a great action game.	8
<b>Medal of Honor: Allied Assault</b>	Electronic Arts	Worth it just for the incredibly intense D-Day mission that almost matches the same scene in <i>Saving Private Ryan</i> .	9
<b>Medieval: Total War</b>	Activision	The ultimate historical strategy game has everything from political intrigue to sweeping real-time battles.	9
<b>Motocross Madness 2</b>	Microsoft	It's mud-splattering, off-road supercross fun with this free-wheeling dirt-bike simulator from the makers of <i>ATV Offroad Fury</i> .	9
<b>NASCAR Racing 2003</b>	Vivendi Universal	It's the final installment of the series, and it's also the best. There's not much new, but everything's been tweaked to near perfection.	9
<b>Neverwinter Nights</b>	Infogrames	If you're a <i>D&amp;D</i> nerd, then you already know, but buy this one especially for the multiplayer and user-made mods.	9
<b>Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide</b>	Atari	This <i>Neverwinter Nights</i> expansion has almost enough content to qualify as a new game itself.	8
<b>No One Lives Forever</b>	Vivendi Universal	Austin Powers ain't got nothing on Cate Archer, the hottest digital chick with a gun since that old hag Lara Croft.	9
<b>No One Lives Forever 2</b>	Vivendi Universal	As funny and stylish as the original '60s spy spoof (if that's even possible), and more fun to play, too.	9
<b>Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis</b>	Codemasters	The first in the highly original series of combat sims, this soldier/flight/tank sim went on to win CGW's 2001 Game of the Year award.	9
<b>Operation Flashpoint: Resistance</b>	Codemasters	Features and content worthy of a brand-new game, this is a benchmark expansion for a classic overlooked game.	9
<b>Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield</b>	Ubisoft	The command interface and character A.I. have been revamped, but it runs slowly on anything but a high-end rig.	8
<b>Rise of Nations</b>	Microsoft	It's not the greatest RTS game we've played, but the nation-building aspect makes <i>Rise of Nations</i> especially appealing.	8
<b>Sacrifice</b>	Interplay	Action/strategy hybrid defies the conventions of all the genres it touches, while making for a fantastically original multiplayer experience.	8
<b>Sid Meier's Sim Golf</b>	Electronic Arts	<i>Sim Golf</i> will have you laying out golf courses and building resorts like a virtual Robert Trent Jones.	8
<b>Silent Storm</b>	Encore	Old-school turn-based gameplay meets new-school 3D destructibility.	9
<b>The Sims</b>	Electronic Arts	It's impossible to categorize EA's addictive superblockbuster life simulator, just like it's impossible to stop playing it.	10
<b>The Sims: Hot Date</b>	Electronic Arts	Gamers everywhere, rejoice! Finally, a game where you can actually learn a thing or two about interacting with the opposite sex!	9
<b>Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast</b>	LucasArts	Yeah, the lightsaber battles are sweet, but Lando's cameo just about seals the deal. And is his ship fly or what?	9
<b>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic</b>	LucasArts	The best thing to happen to the <i>Star Wars</i> franchise since <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> . And the best RPG we've played in years.	10
<b>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Tiger Woods made golf cool (sort of). <i>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</i> makes golf games cool (sort of).	9
<b>Tron 2.0</b>	Buena Vista	For our younger readers, we recommend renting the original <i>Tron</i> , waiting 20 years, and then playing this game.	8
<b>WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne</b>	Vivendi Universal	Adds a single-player campaign to <i>WarCraft III</i> that isn't so moody and serious. There are some new multiplayer units as well.	8
<b>Warlords Battlecry II</b>	Ubisoft	RTS and RPG, two great flavors that go well together—especially when combined with a big, gnarly wizard's staff!	8

## [BUY!]

### TRON 2.0

➔ The Disney *Tron* movie of the '80s may be too old school for some of you to appreciate, but this game sequel is ubercool, with a bit of RPG flavor enhancing a stylish FPS.



## [AVOID!]

### PIRATES OF THE CARRIBBEAN

➔ This game began development as a sequel to *Sea Dogs*, and there's barely any connection to the Disney movie whatsoever, except a thin thread of the story line. This wouldn't matter if the game was good. But it's not.





# → XBOX TOP 50 THERE'S ALWAYS A BIGGER FISH

<b>Armed &amp; Dangerous</b>	LucasArts	Tea-drinking robots and guns that fire sharks. What else could you possibly ask for?	9
<b>Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance</b>	Vivendi Universal	A beautiful-looking <i>Dungeons &amp; Dragons</i> -based hack-n-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
<b>Beyond Good &amp; Evil</b>	Ubisoft	<i>Rayman</i> creator Michel Ancel has done it again: <i>BG&amp;E</i> is a spectacular adventure.	9
<b>Breakdown</b>	Namco	A first-person action game with near-perfect controls results in standout punching, kicking, shooting, and backflipping.	8
<b>Burnout 2: Point of Impact</b>	Acclaim	An arcade racer with an emphasis on spectacular crashes, which—now that we think about it—defeats the purpose of competitive racing.	8
<b>Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge</b>	Microsoft	The single-player mode might last you a day, but the online dogfighting lasts for an eternity. Or maybe just a few months.	8
<b>Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball</b>	Tecmo	Pro tip: When playing <i>DOAXBV</i> , have your TV remote handy. If Mom bursts in, hit the surf button and flip to the History Channel. She'll be proud.	8
<b>Deus Ex: Invisible War</b>	Eidos	<i>Invisible War</i> , much like the first <i>Deus Ex</i> , is a game whose better moments far outweigh its lesser ones.	9
<b>The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind</b>	Bethesda	An exhaustive open-ended RPG that essentially allows you to make it up as you go along, with hundreds of people to talk to.	8
<b>ESPN NBA Basketball</b>	Sega	It's the best-looking basketball game this year, and it's marginally the best-playing one, too.	8
<b>ESPN NFL Football</b>	Sega	The new first-person mode is an interesting addition to a solid game of football, but it's still not enough to top <i>Madden</i> .	8
<b>ESPN NHL Hockey</b>	Sega	The game formerly known as <i>NHL2K(x)</i> , where (x) is the last digit of the year we're in. Oh yeah, it's still really good.	8
<b>Fight Night 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Pure pugilistic pleasure—terrifyingly realistic with innovative controls. Hit me, baby.	9
<b>Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack</b>	Rockstar Games	Containing both <i>Grand Theft Auto III</i> and <i>Grand Theft Auto: Vice City</i> , this is the value of the year. Now go get your mob on.	10
<b>Halo</b>	Microsoft	The definitive reason to own an Xbox. There are plenty of secondary reasons, sure, but no Xbox owner should be without <i>Halo</i> .	10
<b>High Heat 2004</b>	3DO	The best baseball game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
<b>James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing</b>	Electronic Arts	Not a cheap cash-in, but not quite <i>GoldenEye</i> .	8
<b>Jet Set Radio Future</b>	Sega	<i>Jet Set Radio Future</i> has substance and an overabundance of style. Sega simplified tagging in favor of a more robust trick system.	8
<b>The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King</b>	Electronic Arts	The series concludes with EA's best <i>LOTR</i> effort, an improvement on <i>The Two Towers</i> that looks fantastic.	9
<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive owner mode.	9
<b>MechAssault</b>	Microsoft	It's a good single-player game, but it really shines on Xbox Live, where you're pitted against other mech pilots.	8
<b>MotoGP 2</b>	THQ	What we said: "Can only be described as the best motorcycle-racing sim on the planet." What more do you need?	9
<b>MVP Baseball 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Includes every AA and AAA farm club, a unique pitching meter, and looks great to boot. A home run! Heh.	9
<b>NBA Live 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Should you upgrade to the latest version of <i>Live</i> ? As new announcer Marv Albert would say, "YES!"	8
<b>NBA Street Vol. 2</b>	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, <i>Vol. 2</i> takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
<b>NCAA Football 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	EA took the excellent <i>NCAA 2003</i> , added some new blocking and pass-defense enhancements, and produced another winner.	9
<b>Need for Speed Underground</b>	Electronic Arts	All the thrills of illegal street racing without having to run from the cops. Unless you steal your copy.	9
<b>NFL Street</b>	Electronic Arts	It's like football, except more fun.	8
<b>NHL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
<b>Ninja Gaiden</b>	Tecmo	Itagaki's long-awaited and much-anticipated ode to the ninja is absolutely stunning.	9
<b>Otogi: Myth of Demons</b>	Sega	<i>Otogi</i> boasts some of the finest artistic touches you'll find on Xbox. Oh, the slice-n-dice, destroy-everything gameplay is fun, too.	8
<b>Panzer Dragoon Orta</b>	Sega	Aesthetically beautiful and a dream to play. See what Saturn owners were enjoying seven years ago (the original <i>Panzer Dragoon</i> is included).	9
<b>Phantom Crash</b>	Phantagram	Xbox certainly isn't lacking in mech titles. The quirky, unique <i>Phantom Crash</i> has upgradeable mechs and a story-driven one-player mode.	9
<b>Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time</b>	Ubisoft	This is the right way to bring back a classic...if only the camera were more manageable.	8
<b>Project Gotham Racing 2</b>	Microsoft	A great racer with the best implementation of online features to date. Plus, Geometry Wars!	9
<b>Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War</b>	Activision	The single-player missions still aren't much to write home about, but at least you can play them with a pal. The online play is gravy.	8
<b>The Simpsons: Hit &amp; Run</b>	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good <i>Simpsons</i> game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
<b>SSX 3</b>	Electronic Arts	EA ditches individual courses in favor of one giant mountain and ends up making the best <i>SSX</i> yet.	9
<b>Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast</b>	LucasArts	As usual, the <i>Star Wars</i> universe inspires great aesthetic design to complement Raven Software's solid sense of game design.	8
<b>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic</b>	LucasArts	The best thing to happen to the <i>Star Wars</i> franchise since <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> , and the best RPG we've played in years.	10
<b>Steel Battalion</b>	Capcom	If you want to play this game, you have to shell out \$200 for the massive controller. For those with the cash, it's well worth it.	8
<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as <i>VF4: Evolution's</i> .	8
<b>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Tiger Woods made golf cool (sort of). <i>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</i> makes golf games cool (sort of).	9
<b>TimeSplitters 2</b>	Eidos	Everything good about the (PS2) original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options, including maps, weapons, and game modes.	8
<b>Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3</b>	Ubisoft	Tactical shooting at its almost best. Best played cooperatively over the Net with some friends. Or sworn enemies.	8
<b>Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow</b>	Ubisoft	The brilliant multiplayer game—two spies versus two mercenaries—makes up for the brutally difficult single-player game.	9
<b>Tony Hawk's Underground</b>	Activision	The depth and versatility of <i>THUG's</i> customizable gameplay make it the best <i>Hawk</i> yet.	10
<b>Top Spin</b>	Microsoft	Microsoft liked <i>Virtua Tennis</i> so much, it went and made its own version...and it's better.	9
<b>Unreal Championship</b>	Atari	Mindless deathmatching with great weapon design and entertaining multiplayer modes, including the sportlike bombing run.	8
<b>Wakeboarding Unleashed</b>	Activision	A surprisingly stellar extreme-sports title that manages to make the <i>Tony Hawk</i> formula work on water. Watch out for the gators.	9

## [BUY!]

### STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

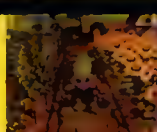
→ Yeah, we know we've been all over this game already, but it's simply the best movie-based game available on Xbox.



## [AVOID!]

### SHREK SUPER PARTY

→ The movie's great. The games based on it, though, have been screamingly awful, and—despite its name—this electronic board game gone wrong is sure to quickly end any party you bring it to.





# → GAMECUBE TOP 50 NOT ALL WHO WANDER ARE LOST

<b>Animal Crossing</b>	Nintendo	The game that never ends is based largely on routine chores, yard work, and interior decorating. So why is it so much fun to play?	9
<b>Beyond Good &amp; Evil</b>	Ubisoft	<i>Rayman</i> creator Michel Ancel has done it again: <i>BG&amp;E</i> is a spectacular adventure.	9
<b>Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg</b>	Sega	Sonic Team cracked a few eggs and whipped up a great new platformer. Yeah, that was lame. Sorry.	8
<b>Burnout 2: Point of Impact</b>	Acclaim	The best-looking—and best-playing—racer on the system. Be prepared to spend many hours in crash mode.	8
<b>Custom Robo</b>	Nintendo	It's like cockfighting, except with robots. Giant robots that you can customize. Nothing to do with roosters whatsoever.	8
<b>Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem</b>	Nintendo	This game, if you let it, will mess with your head. The insanity effects are clever (the first time), and the scenery is downright creepy.	8
<b>F-Zero GX</b>	Nintendo	Unfortunately, <i>F-Zero GX</i> doesn't include vomit bags. Or the <i>AX</i> arcade machine. One of those would have been nice.	9
<b>Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles</b>	Nintendo	A true <i>Final Fantasy</i> ? It matters not. This action-RPG is fantastic when played with friends.	8
<b>Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup</b>	Electronic Arts	J.K. Rowling's fantasy sport is surprisingly playable in videogame form. We wonder what Sega's <i>ESPN Quidditch</i> would be like....	8
<b>Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life</b>	Natsume	Fun game, but does anyone else think it's strange that you can nuzzle your farm animals but not your wife?	8
<b>James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing</b>	Electronic Arts	Not a cheap cash-in, but not quite <i>GoldenEye</i> .	8
<b>The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker</b>	Nintendo	It looks and feels like the best <i>Zelda</i> game ever, but sailing back and forth in the overworld just feels like work.	9
<b>The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King</b>	Electronic Arts	The series concludes with EA's best <i>LOTR</i> effort, an improvement on <i>The Two Towers</i> that looks fantastic.	9
<b>Madden NFL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive owner mode.	9
<b>Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour</b>	Nintendo	The only thing missing is Mario hurling his 4-iron into the pond while screaming obscenities. Oh well, next time.	9
<b>Mario Kart: Double Dash!!</b>	Nintendo	The <i>Mario Kart</i> legacy remains intact, offering a highly enjoyable co-op mode and great track design.	10
<b>Mario Party 4</b>	Nintendo	There are few things better in life than three friends, <i>Mario Party</i> , and a healthy flow of alcoholic beverages (if you're legal, of course).	8
<b>Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes</b>	Konami	<i>Metal Gear</i> magic with drastically improved A.I. and first-person shooting.	9
<b>Metroid Prime</b>	Nintendo	As if they dissected <i>Super Metroid</i> , added a dimension, and put it back together again with slick graphics. In fact, it's exactly like that.	10
<b>NVP Baseball 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Includes every AA and AAA farm club, a unique pitching meter, and looks great to boot. A home run! Heh.	8
<b>NBA Live 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Should you upgrade to the latest version of <i>Live</i> ? As new announcer Mary Albert would say, "YES!"	8
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<b>NFL Street</b>	Electronic Arts	It's like football, except more fun.	8
<b>NHL 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
<b>NHL Hitz Pro</b>	Midway	It's not realistic, but it's the closest we'll ever get to a new <i>Ice Hockey</i> or <i>Blades of Steel</i> .	8
<b>Pac-Man Vs.</b>	Namco	More than 20 years after the game's release, <i>GMR</i> reviews <i>Pac-Man</i> . It's sort of good, we guess.	8
<b>Phantasy Star Online: Episode I &amp; II</b>	Sega	Unhealthily addictive. The pursuit of rare items helps one ignore the somewhat repetitive battles (and the \$9 monthly fee).	9
<b>Pikmin</b>	Nintendo	<i>Mario</i> creator Shigeru Miyamoto got the idea for this quirky strategy game from observing his personal garden. What kind of garden?	8
<b>Pokémon Colosseum</b>	Nintendo	Can an edgier design and 3D Pokémon in dual battles woo back those Pokémaniacs?	8
<b>Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time</b>	Ubisoft	This is the right way to bring back a classic...if only the camera were more manageable.	8
<b>Resident Evil</b>	Capcom	This remake could almost be described as a new game. But is it really <i>Resident Evil</i> without the laughably bad voice acting?	9
<b>Resident Evil 0</b>	Capcom	This one actually is a brand-new game, with significant changes, such as droppable items and the dirty-sounding partner swapping.	8
<b>The Simpsons: Hit &amp; Run</b>	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good <i>Simpsons</i> game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
<b>The Sims: Bustin' Out</b>	Electronic Arts	All the familiar goodness of <i>The Sims</i> , but now with branching career paths, two-player co-op, and more.	9
<b>Skies of Arcadia: Legends</b>	Sega	If you missed it on Dreamcast—and many of you did—you've been given a second chance. It's even got new characters.	8
<b>Soul Calibur II</b>	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as <i>VF4: Evolution's</i> .	9
<b>SSX 3</b>	Electronic Arts	EA ditches individual courses in favor of one giant mountain and ends up making the best <i>SSX</i> yet.	9
<b>Star Wars Rogue Squadron II</b>	LucasArts	At times, <i>Rogue Squadron II</i> syncs closely with scenes from the movies. Impressive when you consider it took only nine months to make.	9
<b>Super Mario Sunshine</b>	Nintendo	Maybe not quite as groundbreaking as <i>Super Mario 64</i> , but even when Nintendo "misses," it makes a big splash.	9
<b>Super Monkey Ball</b>	Sega	Monkeys in balls! An exceptional game based on a simple concept; some of the later levels will eat you for lunch.	8
<b>Super Monkey Ball 2</b>	Sega	Even more monkeys in balls running around for your entertainment! The extra game modes add quite a bit to the simple concept.	8
<b>Super Smash Bros. Melee</b>	Nintendo	A Nintendo fanatic's dream, if only for the exhaustive gallery of collectible Nintendoorabilia. Plus, you can beat the crap out of Jigglypuff.	9
<b>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</b>	Electronic Arts	Tiger Woods made golf cool (sort of). <i>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004</i> makes golf games cool (sort of).	10
<b>Tony Hawk's Underground</b>	Activision	The depth and versatility of <i>THUG's</i> customizable gameplay make it the best <i>Hawk</i> yet.	10
<b>Ultimate Muscle</b>	Bandai	If the soap-opera antics of the WWE don't go far enough over the top, perhaps the wacky <i>Ultimate Muscle</i> will be more to your liking.	9
<b>Viewtiful Joe</b>	Capcom	A refreshingly original platformer/brawler with an outstanding art style and rock-solid mechanics.	9
<b>WarioWare Inc.: Mega Party Game\$</b>	Nintendo	All the addictive madness of the GBA minigames, available in multiplayer modes that will kick up your competitive streak.	8
<b>Wave Race: Blue Storm</b>	Nintendo	Great wave physics, awesome weather effects, and a deeper control scheme than the original. An underrated gem of a racer.	8

## [BUY!]

### 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

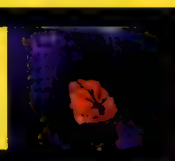
→ Bond is the perfect movie franchise for videogames. *Everything or Nothing* has an amazing cinematic feel, interspersing varying gameplay into a polished, action-packed adventure.



## [AVOID!]

### THE HOBBIT

→ This game reminds us of the ill-conceived Baby Snoopy and Baby Warner Brothers lines. Baby Tolkien, anyone? Generic gameplay is rounded out with boring fetch-quests and sluggish controls.





# → GBA TOP 50 ONE HABIT YOU SHOULDN'T BREAK

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GBA RATING
<b>Advance Wars</b>	Nintendo	Turn-based military strategy that should be a part of everyone's GBA library. Once you get sucked in, it's hard to pull yourself away.	8
<b>Advance Wars 2</b>	Nintendo	<i>Wars 2</i> only adds a single new unit, but it's chock-full of new maps, terrain, and CO powers.	8
<b>Baseball Advance</b>	THQ	There are only four stadiums and no multiplayer, but it's still a great game of baseball.	8
<b>Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand</b>	Konami	It's gonna be a bright [bright!], briiiiiiight sun-shiny day. Well, it had damn well better be.	8
<b>Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow</b>	Konami	Better sound and castle design than <i>Harmony of Dissonance</i> , but much too short. The soul system is ace, though.	8
<b>Castlevania: Circle of the Moon</b>	Konami	<i>Castlevania</i> is meant to be played in two dimensions, and this game shows why. A complex card system governs your special abilities.	9
<b>Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance</b>	Konami	The second <i>Castlevania</i> is one of the best reasons to own a Game Boy Advance. The colors are brighter and the bosses are bigger.	9
<b>Chu Chu Rocket!</b>	Sega	A highly addictive and highly cute puzzle-action game from Sega that's best played with multiple friends. Mouse mania!	7
<b>Fire Emblem</b>	Nintendo	If <i>Advance Wars</i> and <i>Final Fantasy Tactics</i> fell in love and had a baby, they'd call it <i>Fire Emblem</i> .	8
<b>F-Zero: Maximum Velocity</b>	Nintendo	A new <i>F-Zero</i> based on the classic SNES game, with improved graphics, new tracks, and four-player support.	8
<b>Final Fantasy Tactics Advance</b>	Square Enix	At long last, we have a new <i>Final Fantasy Tactics</i> —and it's absolutely spectacular. Set aside 60 hours of free time....	9
<b>Final Fight One</b>	Capcom	Another enhanced port of an SNES original. How come mayors of large cities don't go on ass-kicking rampages anymore?	8
<b>Golden Sun</b>	Nintendo	A deep combat engine and brilliant graphics make this one of the better RPGs available on GBA.	8
<b>Golden Sun: The Lost Age</b>	Nintendo	Picks up right where the first one left off. The battle system remains basically unchanged, but the puzzles are much more rewarding.	8
<b>Gradius Galaxies</b>	Konami	Konami's classic shooter series translates to the portable very well. Great graphics and plenty of challenge.	7
<b>GT Advance 3</b>	THQ	The <i>GT Advance</i> series has always been technically marvelous, and <i>GTA3</i> (yeah, we know) finally has a battery-save function!	8
<b>Guilty Gear X Advance</b>	Sammy	Not surprisingly, the animation and soundtrack take a hit, but it still plays like its big brother versions.	7
<b>Kirby: Nightmare in Dreamland</b>	Nintendo	A remake of the NES classic <i>Kirby's Adventure</i> with updated graphics and multiplayer support.	8
<b>Klonoa: Empire of Dreams</b>	Namco	Straying from the original formula, this <i>Klonoa</i> is more of a puzzle game than a platformer, with great graphics and sound.	8
<b>Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past</b>	Nintendo	Invite three friends over and you've got a bona fide <i>Zelda</i> party. Drink red medicine till you puke and skinny-dip in Lake Hylia!	9
<b>Lufia: The Ruins of Lore</b>	Atlus	Perennially overshadowed by Square's offerings, the <i>Lufia</i> series is just as engaging as <i>Final Fantasy</i> . It's also more challenging.	8
<b>Lunar Legend</b>	Ubisoft	The anime cut-scenes and superb voice acting may be gone, but the great <i>Lunar</i> gameplay and story remain intact.	8
<b>Mario &amp; Luigi: Superstar Saga</b>	Nintendo	It's the only place you'll find the Tanoomba, and that's reason enough to buy this stellar (and hilarious) RPG.	9
<b>Mario Kart: Super Circuit</b>	Nintendo	A balanced blend of <i>Super Mario Kart</i> and <i>Mario Kart 64</i> that even includes all the tracks from the former.	8
<b>Mega Man Battle Network 2</b>	Capcom	More of an RPG than an platformer, the <i>Battle Network</i> series is a nice change of pace for Mega Man and pals.	7
<b>Mega Man Battle Network 3</b>	Capcom	<i>Battle Network 3</i> is pretty much more of the same with a few minor additions, but it's already a great series.	8
<b>Mega Man Zero</b>	Capcom	A difficult yet engaging installment of the <i>X</i> side story that is played with Zero, who is equipped with an arm cannon and beamsaber.	7
<b>Metroid Fusion</b>	Nintendo	The follow-up to <i>Super Metroid</i> is eight years late, but the wait was well worth it. An adventure that ends way too quickly.	9
<b>Metroid: Zero Mission</b>	Nintendo	True to its roots, with an expanded and finessed story.	9
<b>Ninja Five-O</b>	Konami	A challenging platformer that brings back fond memories of <i>Bionic Commando</i> , complete with throwing stars and katanas.	7
<b>Phantasy Star Collection</b>	THQ	Straightforward classic RPG action that's been overlooked for far too long. Includes <i>Phantasy Star 1, 2, and 3</i> .	9
<b>Pokémon Ruby &amp; Sapphire</b>	Nintendo	Aside from 2-on-2 battles, the first GBA <i>Pokémon</i> combo doesn't really change the original formula.	7
<b>Rayman Advance</b>	Ubisoft	<i>Rayman</i> is just as good in 2D as he is in 3D. It looks great and provides a decent challenge.	8
<b>The Sims: Bustin' Out</b>	Electronic Arts	The chance for a more successful life is in the palm of your hand.	8
<b>Sonic Advance 2</b>	THQ	<i>Sonic Advance 2</i> is much improved over the first one, and it connects to GameCube's <i>Sonic Adventure</i> games to boot.	8
<b>Sonic Pinball Party</b>	Sega	Not limited to just hedgehogs, Sega's solid pinball features tables from the classics <i>Nights</i> and <i>Samba de Amigo</i> .	8
<b>Street Fighter Alpha 3</b>	Capcom	Sure, the limiting button configuration prevents <i>SFA3</i> from being a completely accurate port, but it's great nonetheless.	8
<b>Super Dodgeball Advance</b>	Atlus	You're not going to find that many dodgeball games on the market, so thankfully, this one is worthwhile. Better in multiplayer.	7
<b>Super Ghouls &amp; Ghosts</b>	Capcom	Remember how frustrated you got playing through <i>Ghouls &amp; Ghosts</i> ? Get ready to do it all over again.	8
<b>Super Mario Advance: Super Mario 2</b>	Nintendo	Aside from the odd naming system, you can't really complain about a portable version of <i>Super Mario Bros. 2</i> .	8
<b>Super Mario Advance 2: Mario World</b>	Nintendo	There's really not much else that can be said except "portable <i>Super Mario World</i> " and "you should buy it."	9
<b>Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island</b>	Nintendo	Yoshi is the star of this show, one of the greatest 2D platformers ever put to silicon. There are even a couple of new bonus levels.	9
<b>Super Monkey Ball Jr.</b>	THQ	An excellent port of the game that sold many a GameCube. THQ even included <i>Monkey Bowling</i> and <i>Monkey Fight</i> !	8
<b>Super Puzzle Fighter II</b>	Capcom	Sometimes, you just get bored with <i>Tetris</i> . <i>Puzzle Fighter II</i> is a fantastic port of a fantastic and highly addictive game. Buy it now.	8
<b>Super Street Fighter II</b>	Capcom	The combo of <i>SFA3</i> , <i>Guilty Gear X Advance</i> , and <i>Super Street Fighter II</i> is devastating. And you don't even need any quarters!	8
<b>Tactics Ogre: The Knights of Lodis</b>	Atlus	An incredibly deep strategy-RPG with a branching story line and a rewarding battle system.	8
<b>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3</b>	Activision	It's amazing how Activision managed to cram <i>Tony Hawk</i> into a cartridge while keeping the essence of the console version intact.	8
<b>Virtua Tennis</b>	THQ	A surprisingly faithful rendition of the console versions with good visuals and an engaging world tour mode. The best tennis on GBA.	8
<b>Wario Land 4</b>	Nintendo	The <i>Wario</i> series of platformers has always been excellent, and this one is no exception. Short but incredibly sweet.	8
<b>WarioWare Inc.</b>	Nintendo	A large collection of microgames fuels <i>WarioWare's</i> madcap mayhem. The freshest game we've seen in a long time.	9

## [BUY!]

### SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE

➔ Activision's title is more like the comic book than the movie, but it has a real Spidey feel with crawling, webswinging, and zip-lining abilities galore—even in-air maneuverability.



## [AVOID!]

### MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE—OPERATION SURMA

➔ Bad graphics and bland gameplay do nothing to put you in a Tom Cruise mood. As if you could get in one anyway.







# GAME GEEZER

HE'S OLD!  
HE'S PISSED!

## WHETHER GOOD GAME OR BAD, SEX SELLS

➔ "Hey, Geezer! They found a Neanderthal buried in a frozen cave. You know what they called it?"

No, Timmy, I don't. Want to know what they call your daddy when he's out selling buttons and your mommy is being visited by the electrician, the plumber, three different pizza delivery men, the junior varsity soccer team, and Zamfir, Master of the Pan Flute?

"Mommy says you're so mean because you forgot how to be nice."

Oh yeah? Did she say that before or after the soccer team voted her their honorary captain? Ah, don't bother answering that. You rotten kids just pull up a chair and fetch my pneumonia bucket and complainin' slippers. I got some bitching to do.

"Um, why's the door locked?"

Last week I was telling that Morton kid why Crash Bandicoot was the devil, and he just up and ran! And don't bother with the windows! Superglue!

"What's it going to be this time?"

Why'd they make an *Invisible War*? How come *Scooby-Doo: Night of 100*

*Frights* has only 92 frights in it?"

Very funny. Now, shaddup! If I wanted your opinion, I'd have told Johnson there to beat it out of you. No, this time it's all about what brought us here in the first place: steaming monkey love. And by love, I mean, S-E-X. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not going to tell you sex is bad, 'cause it ain't! From Aunt Jemima to Mama Celeste, sex helps fuel the economy. I have a friend who's 120 years old, and he stays alive each year waiting for the new *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition.

And sex even makes the videogames better! Show me a man alive who don't prefer the feminine wiles of Ms. Pac-Man to Pac-Man, and I'll show you a guy ain't fit to stick the quarter in the arcade machine, if you know what I mean!

"Mr. Geezer? What do you mean?"

I mean that sometimes, these game makers go overboard. We loved Lara Croft when she was in good games, but maybe it was just

because of the short shorts and tight, boob-enhancing shirts she wore. In that crappy *BMX XXX*, they used sex to cover the fact that the game sucked like a black hole—I used to watch you punk kids make your own riders, dress 'em up like schoolgirl hookers, and then have 'em drive around that crappy game looking for other hookers to pick up! Remember how long you played that game?


"Just until we got bored of trying to unlock the nudity. Then we went and watched *Skinemax* at Timmy's house."

Damn straight! *BMX XXX* was someone's attempt at using sex to sell a fossilized turd. But it's not just the bad games that overdo it. Every fighting game, good or bad, from

*Street Fighter II* to *Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus*, has to have at least one female character who fights in lingerie, a thong, or dresses like a fourth grader ready for a hot date.

Sure it's nice to look at, but so was Mrs. Geezer 65 years ago. But is it something that makes sense in the context of a fighting game? Or is it just some game developer thinking you won't buy his game unless it's got a seminaked woman prancing around in it?

"Wow. That's really deep."

No, deep was how they buried the Freezer Geezer. Now get out of my sight, you kids! I'm gonna go stare at *BloodRayne*'s tightly packaged ass for a while. 

**BMX XXX USED SEX TO COVER THE FACT THAT THE GAME SUCKED LIKE A BLACK HOLE.**



The views expressed by Game Geezer are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of GMR.



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